

# *The End of* **BORLEY RECTORY**



**HARRY PRICE**

*By the Same Author*

COINS OF KENT AND KENTISH TOKENS  
SHROPSHIRE TOKENS AND MINTS  
THE SCEPTIC (*psychic play*)  
REVELATIONS OF A SPIRIT MEDIUM (*Joint Editor*)  
COLD LIGHT ON SPIRITUALISTIC PHENOMENA  
STELLA C.: AN ACCOUNT OF SOME ORIGINAL  
EXPERIMENTS IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH  
SHORT-TITLE CATALOGUE OF WORKS ON PSYCHICAL  
RESEARCH (*and Supplement*)  
L'ILLUSIONISMO (*Encyclopedie Italiana*)  
RUDI SCHNEIDER: A SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF  
HIS MEDIUMSHIP  
REGURGITATION AND THE DUNCAN MEDIUMSHIP  
AN ACCOUNT OF SOME FURTHER EXPERIMENTS  
WITH RUDI SCHNEIDER  
LEAVES FROM A PSYCHIST'S CASE-BOOK  
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH (*talking film*)  
CONFESIONS OF A GHOST-HUNTER  
THE HAUNTING OF CASHEN'S GAP: A MODERN  
'MIRACLE' INVESTIGATED (*in collaboration with*  
*R. S. Lambert*)  
'PSYCHICAL RESEARCH' and 'FIRE-WALKING'  
(*Encyclopedie Britannica*)  
A REPORT ON TWO EXPERIMENTAL FIRE-WALKS  
FIFTY YEARS OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: A CRITI-  
CAL SURVEY  
'THE MOST HAUNTED HOUSE IN ENGLAND': TEN  
YEARS' INVESTIGATION OF BORLEY RECTORY  
SEARCH FOR TRUTH: MY LIFE FOR PSYCHICAL  
RESEARCH (*an autobiography*)  
POLTERGEIST OVER ENGLAND: THREE CENTURIES  
OF MISCHIEVOUS GHOSTS



PLATE I. BORLEY CHURCH (DEDICATION UNKNOWN), APRIL 5, 1944

Fr.

*By courtesy of David E. Scherman*

# THE END OF BORLEY RECTORY

*'The Most Haunted House in England'*

*By*  
**HARRY PRICE**

Matters of fact well proved ought not to be denied because we cannot conceive how they can be performed. Nor is it a reasonable method of inference, first to presume the thing impossible, and thence to conclude that the fact cannot be proved. On the contrary, we should judge of the action by the evidence, and not of the evidence by the measures of our fancies about the action.

JOSEPH GLANVILL, D.D., F.R.S., *Saducismus Triumphatus*  
(London, 1681)

*With 26 Plates in Half-tone  
and other Illustrations in the Text*



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COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
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## PREFACE

THIS second monograph on the Borley hauntings claims to be no more than a continuation of the story, with the inclusion of all the additional evidence<sup>1</sup> for the phenomena which has been collected and collated during the past six years. The last days of the Rectory are described, and some interesting theories for the causation of the manifestations have been discussed.

This book could not have been written without the generous help and kindly co-operation of a number of friends and contributors, most of whom, I regret to say, I have never met. It is with much pleasure, therefore, that I am now able publicly to acknowledge their great services to me and to the cause of scientific psychical research.

I am indebted to the Rev. A. C. Henning (Rector of Borley-cum-Liston) and Mrs Henning, and to Miss Ethel Bull and the Bull family generally, for much hospitality and help during my frequent visits to the Rectory and its neighbourhood; and Mrs Norah Walrond, of Thorne Lodge, Cockfield, Suffolk, has assisted me in many ways.

The Rev. Canon W. J. Phythian-Adams, D.D., Canon of Carlisle, has contributed two invaluable chapters to the book, and I am grateful for his help. His analytical essays are so important that it is doubtful whether I should have attempted another work on the Rectory had it not been for his great interest in the case.

To Sir Ernest Jelf, formerly Senior Master of the Supreme Court, and to Sir Albion Richardson, K.C., C.B.E., Recorder of Nottingham, my especial thanks are due. For the first time in the annals of psychical research the opinions of distinguished jurists have been publicly expressed as to the validity or otherwise

<sup>1</sup> All the evidence, witnesses' statements, original letters, documents, and photographs, etc., are preserved in the Borley *dossier* in the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature, in the University of London.

of phenomena witnessed in a haunted house. So Borley has made legal, as well as psychic, history.

Other contributors to whom I am greatly indebted include: Mr A. J. B. Robertson, M.A., of St John's College, Cambridge, and his colleagues, for the formation of the Cambridge Commission of inquiry into the hauntings, and for their Report; Mr and Mrs Gilbert Hayes; Mrs C. H. B. Gowan; Mrs W. John Braithwaite; Mr H. F. Russell, of Chelmsford; Mr Percy Pigott; Mr P. Shaw Jeffrey, M.A.; Surgeon-Lieutenant G. B. Nawrocki; Mr Robert Fordyce Aickman and his friends; Mr A. C. Cooper; Mr Arthur S. Medcraft; and Mr G. P. J. L'Estrange.

For the expert examination of the remains found at Borley I am grateful to Dr Eric H. Bailey, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., of the County Hospital, Ashford, Middlesex; Mr Leslie J. Godden, L.D.S., R.C.S.; and the Rev. Father M. J. Moriarty, of Westminster Cathedral. For secretarial work during the excavations Mrs Ethel English was indispensable, and my thanks are due to her, and to all those who assisted at the diggings. In this connexion I must mention the Rev. Father John Wright, of S. Philip Neri, Arundel, who was, perhaps, the first priest to say a Requiem Mass for the soul of 'Marie Lairre'—who so often requested it. I thank him for meeting her wishes.

The value of this monograph has been enhanced by the inclusion of many documentary—and beautiful—photographs, and the following gentlemen deserve the highest praise and thanks for their skill: Mr David E. Scherman, of the magazine *Life*; Mr Harry Marshall<sup>1</sup> and Mr J. H. Russell, of Trinity College, Oxford (who also contribute an account of their experiences at the Rectory); and Mr Eric G. Calcraft, of Sudbury.

For all the plans of the Rectory, some photographs, and much expert help in many directions, I have to acknowledge the kindness of Mr Sidney H. Glanville; his daughter, Mrs Helen Carter; and his son, Squadron-Leader R. H. Glanville. The Glanville family have aided me consistently during the past eight years of my investigation, and I am much indebted to them.

<sup>1</sup> Those photographs dated January 5, 1944, were taken by Mr Marshall and his friend.

And how can I thank my many correspondents? Their name is legion, and all, in some way, have helped me in my work. A number of them have been mentioned in the text, and I am especially grateful to the Rev. Canon Harold Anson, M.A., Master of the Temple; Emeritus Professor W. B. Stevenson, D.Litt., D.D., LL.D.; Mr Edwyn R. Bevan, O.B.E., M.A.; Mrs C. Ryan Baines; Mr C. J. Cave, M.A., J.P., F.S.A.; Mr Henry N. Ridley, C.M.G., F.R.S., M.A., F.L.S.; and many others for suggestions and help. Mrs Georgina Dawson's researches into the history of the Waldegrave family and Borley are as complete as they are interesting, and I thank her for sending me her records.

I end this Preface on a note of regret. Since my last monograph was published two former Rectors of Borley have passed away. The Rev. G. Eric Smith died on August 3, 1940, and the Rev. L. A. Foyster on April 18, 1945. Both gentlemen were deeply interested in the Rectory phenomena, and both helped me materially in the preparation of the Borley annals. Readers will, I know, join me in offering my deepest sympathy to their respective widows and families.

H. P.

THE REFORM CLUB  
PALL MALL, S.W.1

*April 1946*



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## CHAPTER I

### THE STORY OF 'THE MOST HAUNTED HOUSE IN ENGLAND'

IN the concluding words of the preface to my *The Most Haunted House in England* I asserted, in a moment of over-confidence, that the flames that so nearly consumed Borley Rectory on the night of February 27-28, 1939, 'brought down the curtain on the most extraordinary and best-documented case of haunting in the annals of psychical research.'

Well, I was wrong. For ten years I had toiled in an attempt to solve this psychic puzzle. I imagined that my labours in investigating this most convincing and remarkable case were at an end. I could not visualize that there was much more to be said than had been recorded either by me or by my hundred observers—mostly educated and cultured men and women, who had devoted their time, money, and skill to probing the mysteries that have been associated with the Rectory for more than eighty years.

With the publication of my monograph in 1940 I soon realized that the fiery end of the Rectory did not mean the end of the story. And I realized too that my work was not finished. Shoals of letters (over eight hundred to date) began to reach me: letters asking for information, letters containing suggestions, theories, new interpretations, and—of vital importance—letters imparting new information and new evidence. Some of this evidence dates back more than half a century. And I found that new intellects were being brought to bear on Borley and its problems.

Brilliant thinkers, such as Sir Ernest Jelf, formerly King's Remembrancer (and Senior Master of the Supreme Court); Dr W. J. Phythian-Adams, Canon of Carlisle; and Sir Albion Richardson, K.C., C.B.E., were studying the case academically and analysing the phenomena—with what results the reader of this volume will be made aware of in due course. In addition to all this intense interest in Borley and its invisible (and, occasionally,

visible) entities, there were discovered new documents that shed a flood of light on our findings, and confirmed some of our theories.

But perhaps what surprised me most was the fact that the phenomena at the Rectory were continuing. Intelligent observers who visited the ruins reported the recurrence of most of the old phenomena, and some new ones. Amid the burnt and blackened beams of the upper storey were heard the familiar paranormal footsteps and the familiar door-slammimg—though there was very little to walk on and no doors to slam. And the famous Borley 'nun,' or her shadow, was seen again. Stranger still, a distinguished business man was 'jumped upon' by a weighty invisible that bore him to the ground—in a pool of muddy water. There was nothing ambiguous about this: it was in broad daylight, and the victim was accompanied by his two sons, officers in the R.A.F. I cite these few incidents in order to emphasize that the ghosts of Borley were by no means 'dead'—fire or no fire.

As these reports began to accumulate it became increasingly obvious that a supplementary statement would be needed, a 'sequel' to, or continuation of, *The Most Haunted House in England*, a new edition of which, it was suggested, might be issued with an account of the latest developments. Then came Canon Phythian-Adams's clever analysis of the case, and the exciting sequel. The Cambridge Commission, too (see Chapter IX), issued a long and detailed report on its findings. All this new material was too great, and certainly much too important, to incorporate in a new edition of the first Borley monograph, and so a new book was decided upon. Here it is.

To make the present report completely intelligible to new readers and to those unacquainted with the Borley story, it is necessary for me to give a synopsis of the events that occurred at Borley Rectory between the years 1863 and 1939, the period covered by my first book. But this general view of the Borley hauntings is a mere epitome of the phenomena. For a full, critical, and detailed examination of all the incidents, with the names of the many observers who recorded them, the original monograph must be consulted. Unfortunately, this seems to have

disappeared completely from the market—even the second-hand book market—though copies are to be found in most public and circulating libraries. My advice to the reader is to obtain a copy if possible, as it and the present volume are complementary to each other, though each is complete in itself. It is hoped to reprint *The Most Haunted House in England* in due course. To those who are unable to secure a copy of this first report, the following conspectus of events, from 1863 to 1939, will enable them to follow intelligently the account of all that has happened at Borley Rectory during the past six years.

Before I begin my narrative I must first answer a question that is often put to me: Who first called the Rectory 'the most haunted house'? I do not know. On my first visit to the house, on June 12, 1929, as I swung my car into the market square at Sudbury, I found I had come to the end of my instructions for finding the Rectory and was at a loss how to proceed. I inquired from a bystander how I could get to Borley Rectory. 'Oh,' he said, 'you mean the most haunted house in England.' And that is how and where I first heard the phrase. I was to hear it many times afterwards.

Borley, I found, was two and a half miles from Sudbury, Suffolk. The river Stour flows through the parish of Borley, dividing the counties of Suffolk and Essex. Borley is on the Essex (the north or right) bank of the river. In 1931 the parish contained 121 inhabitants. I am under the impression that the population has since decreased, which is hardly surprising.

Borley is also about two miles from Long Melford,<sup>1</sup> Suffolk, a long and charming village containing Melford Hall, the home of Sir William Hyde Parker. His residence too was badly damaged by fire on February 21, 1942, when a famous Henry VIII bedstead was destroyed, and priceless Tudor and Queen Anne furniture was burned.<sup>2</sup> The nearest stations to Borley are at Sudbury and Long Melford, some sixty miles from London on the London and North-eastern Railway.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Long Melford' connotes a 'soft leather bag in which farmers and countrymen carried their money to market.'—*Sunday Times*, April 16, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *The Observer*, February 22, 1942.

As Borley Church (dedication unknown) plays a prominent part in my narrative, I will describe it. It is a small building of stone in the Early English style, with traces of Saxon work in the embattled western tower, which contains two bells (dated 1574 and 1723 respectively). The registers date from 1652 (baptisms), 1656 (burials), and 1709 (marriages). I include these details in case any reader wishes to do some original research work at Borley. When I first knew the parish the living was worth £225 a year, with ten acres of glebe and the Rectory, in the gift of the executors of the Rev. Henry F. Bull (known as Harry Bull), who figures so largely in these pages. In 1935 the living was combined with that of the neighbouring parish of Liston. The Rev. A. C. Henning is now in charge of both parishes, and resides at Liston Rectory.

Much of the land at Borley belongs to the Bulls, and they were a family of parsons. Henry D. E. Bull (born in 1833) was Rector of Borley, and built the famous Rectory in 1863. It was a two-storeyed monstrosity in red brick. On account of his rapidly increasing family, he added a wing in 1875-76. This increased the accommodation by several rooms, which now numbered about thirty, with large and rambling cellars. The Rectory was built on the site of a much older building—probably a previous rectory—belonging to the Herringham family, and during our investigations we traced the foundations and footings of the former house. The bricks were of the ancient two-inch type. There is a generally accepted tradition that a monastery once occupied the site, but we have failed to find any confirmation of this.

Harry Bull, Henry's son, also entered the Church, and became curate to his father (it was his third curacy). When Henry Bull died in 1892 he was naturally succeeded by his son, Harry, who became Rector. Harry died in 1927. Father and son between them held the living for an unbroken period of sixty-five years.

Upon the death of Harry in 1927 the Bull family tried to find a new rector. They had some difficulty. The large, ugly, rambling, and inconvenient Rectory, with few amenities (neither gas nor electric light, and water pumped by hand), was not

every one's choice. I believe that about a dozen clergy and their wives visited the place, saw, hesitated, promised to think it over—and finally refused. Probably their wives decided for them. And the Rectory was acquiring a 'reputation.'

However, after sixteen months' search a new Rector was found. This was the Rev. G. Eric Smith, who, with his wife, took up residence at the Rectory in the autumn of 1928. Mr Smith was inducted on October 2, 1928. They had no children. Nine months later, on July 14, 1929, the Smiths vacated the Rectory. They found it impossible to live there owing to the lack of amenities, to say nothing of the amazing and disconcerting things that were happening in their home. They went to live at Long Melford for a few months, finally quitting the district in April 1930.

Again the Rectory was empty for some six months. But, most opportunely, a cousin of the Bulls, deciding to give up his nineteen years' missionary work in Canada, arrived in England and was inducted to the living in October 1930. The new Rector was the Rev. L. A. Foyster, M.A.,<sup>1</sup> a cultured and charming man, who, with his equally charming wife, 'stuck it' for the (in the circumstances) long period of exactly five years. They left in October 1935. How they remained there five minutes is remarkable, because on the very first day of their residence Mr Foyster records in his diary: 'A voice calling Marianne's [his wife's] name; footsteps heard by self, Marianne, Adelaide [a little adopted daughter], and man working in the house. "Harry Bull" seen at different times by Marianne. . . .' A book could be written on what the Foysters experienced during their five years' stay at Borley Rectory. In fact, Mr Foyster did write a book dealing with the worst period of their residence there. It is called *Fifteen Months in a Haunted House*, and describes many hundreds of phenomena—a few amusing, many terrifying, and all inexplicable. Mr Foyster hoped to get it published one day. He also kept a day-to-day diary in which he recorded all these strange happenings. I will reproduce some extracts later.

When the Foysters vacated the Rectory Queen Anne's Bounty

<sup>1</sup> Died April 18, 1945. (See Chapter XIX, p. 292.)

decided to sell the place, as they considered it unfit for a parson to live in. So they offered it to me! They wanted only £500 for it. This was cheap, as the house cost about £3000 to build, and there were, I think, some three acres of garden, etc., a cottage, and other buildings. I hesitated about buying it because I live 150 miles from Borley, and the place would have been a liability. I did not mind its 'terrible' reputation. That alone was worth £500—to a psychical researcher. So I contented myself with renting the Rectory for a year. It was sold eventually to a Captain W. H. Gregson, and during his occupation the place went up in smoke, at midnight of February 27–28, 1939, after the 'spirits' had threatened to destroy it by fire. As the reader will learn, what was not burned down was finally blown down and pulled down. To-day not one brick stands upon another. However, I possess about two hundred photographs of it, in its entirety and at various stages of its disintegration—an invaluable pictorial record which is being preserved for posterity, together with all the documents, plans, protocols, reports, Press cuttings, and letters pertaining to the case. The *dossier* is a vast one.

I have now given a brief history of the Rectory, to date. As I have stated, the living has been joined with that of Liston, and Borley-cum-Liston is its present title, which is not likely to be changed. It is highly improbable that a new Rectory will ever be erected at Borley. If it is I hope it will be built on the old site—and I hope I shall be alive to watch results!

How I was introduced to Borley and its phenomena can be told in a few words. On June 11, 1929, the News Editor of the *Daily Mirror* telephoned to me, saying that the Rev. G. E. Smith had appealed to him for help. The most extraordinary things were happening at his Rectory: bells were ringing of their own volition; strange lights were seen in empty and locked rooms in the Rectory; the famous 'nun' (of whom more anon) had been seen again; slow, dragging footsteps were heard across the floor of an unoccupied room; a young maid-servant, imported from London, had left after two days' work; and her successor declared that she saw an old-fashioned coach, drawn by two brown horses,

gallop through the hedge, sweep across the lawn—and vanish into thin air. She, too, saw the nun leaning over a gate near the house.

The editor told me that he had already sent a representative, Mr V. C. Wall, to the Rectory, and asked me whether I would join him and take charge of the case. I said yes—with alacrity—little dreaming that, sixteen years later, I should still be engaged on the problem.

#### MY FIRST VISIT TO THE RECTORY

My secretary and I arrived at the Rectory on Wednesday, June 12, 1929, and, over lunch, Mr and Mrs Smith related their adventures. They confirmed Mr Wall's accounts,<sup>1</sup> with more detailed information. One summer afternoon Mr Smith heard distinct sibilant whisperings on the landing, over his head. He was alone in the house, and the sounds followed him as he walked. They were heard many times during their residence. Later he heard a woman's voice crying pitifully, 'Don't, Carlos, don't!' the words tailing away into a sort of muttering.<sup>2</sup> Mrs Smith too heard 'voices' and, more terrifying, frequently saw a dark and shadowy figure leaning over one of the drive-gates. Whenever she attempted to investigate the figure instantly vanished. Another strange phenomenon was the sudden and simultaneous projection of the keys from their locks. Several rooms opened out on to the hall and adjacent passages. The

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mirror*, June 10-15, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Henry N. Ridley, C.M.G., F.R.S., M.A., F.L.S., the distinguished botanist, draws my attention to a similar and well-authenticated phenomenon which he, personally, has heard in the Malay Peninsula. It is known as the 'Orang Bunian' (literally, 'men making a noise'—i.e., chattering) or the 'talking men.' He says, 'I met this remarkable phenomenon at Toas, in Western Singapore, while inspecting forests.... At one point I heard quite distinctly the voices of people coming towards me from the north. The whole place was covered with forest for miles on both sides of the track, and there were no villages or houses for about a day's march. The words of the voices were indistinguishable, but the sound was as if about half a dozen men were talking together.' The voices were located at one spot only. Mr Ridley walked right round them. His men were very nervous, as they were familiar with the phenomenon. He discovered that perhaps fifty or sixty years previously there had been a village at the spot, though all traces, except a few fruit-trees, had disappeared. No one living had seen the village. Mr Ridley's inquiries elicited the fact that in the north of the island the 'voices' were much louder, due to the fact that the vanished villages had been larger. Mr Ridley was completely satisfied that the 'voices' he heard were paranormal ones.

locks had keys, and frequently, in full light, some of the keys would suddenly be propelled from their locks, simultaneously. I witnessed this typical Poltergeist phenomenon once, when, I think, four of the keys were shot out in this way. Of course I examined everything, but there was no normal explanation. Trickery was impossible.

Poltergeist phenomena were frequent during the Smiths' residence, and some damage was done. An expensive vase that normally stood on a bedroom mantelpiece was found smashed to pieces at the foot of the main stairs.

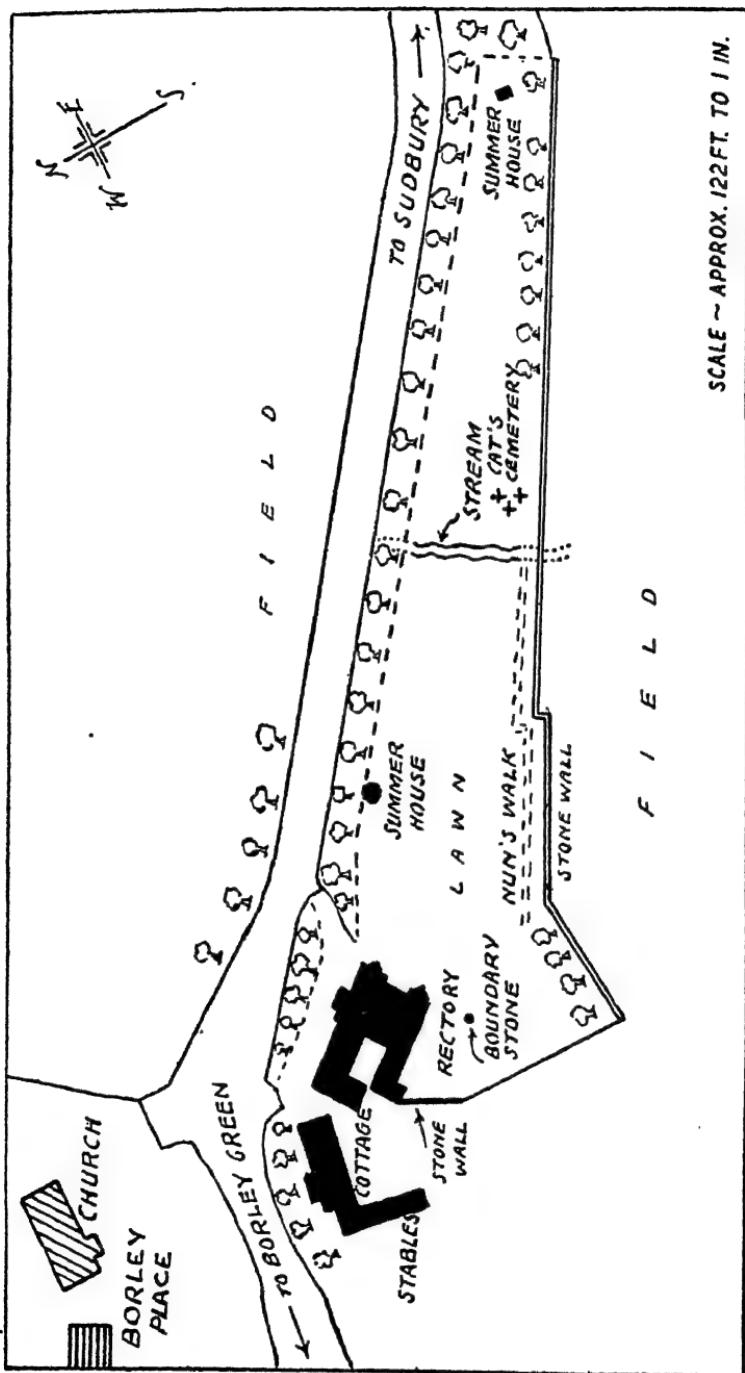
#### A GRUESOME FIND

One morning, when Mrs Smith was turning out the library cupboard, she found a small brown-paper parcel neatly tied up with string. She had not noticed it before, and proceeded to undo it. She was shocked to discover a small skull, in perfect condition, with all the teeth *in situ*. Medical opinion pronounced the skull to be that of a young woman. No one knew whose skull it was, where it came from, or how it got into the cupboard. Finally it was reverently buried in the churchyard, the mystery still unsolved. According to Mr Hardy, a foreman painter at Borley, the skull 'had been lying about the house for a long time. Once it was buried, but the phenomena increased to such an extent that it was restored to the Rectory.' This story can be exactly paralleled by one that Colonel Henry M. Hardcastle, of Bradshaw Hall, Bolton, related to me.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE STORY OF THE NUN

It was over lunch that we heard the full account of the legends and traditions connected with the Rectory. The principal story is that, in the thirteenth century, a beautiful young novice from the nunnery at Bures, seven miles from Borley, fell in love with one of the lay brothers at Borley Monastery. They eloped in a black coach drawn by a pair of bay horses, driven by another lay brother; were missed by their respective superiors; were chased

<sup>1</sup> See *Poltergeist over England*, by Harry Price (London, 1945), pp. 345-346, and Chapter XIX of the present volume.



PLAN I: KEY PLAN OF BORLEY RECTORY AND GROUNDS (3.732 ACRES)

Drawn by S. H. Glanville.

and caught—and a terrible punishment speedily followed. The would-be bridegroom was hanged, and the girl was bricked up alive in her own convent—after the awful words 'Vade in Pace' had been pronounced. History does not relate what happened to the driver of the coach.

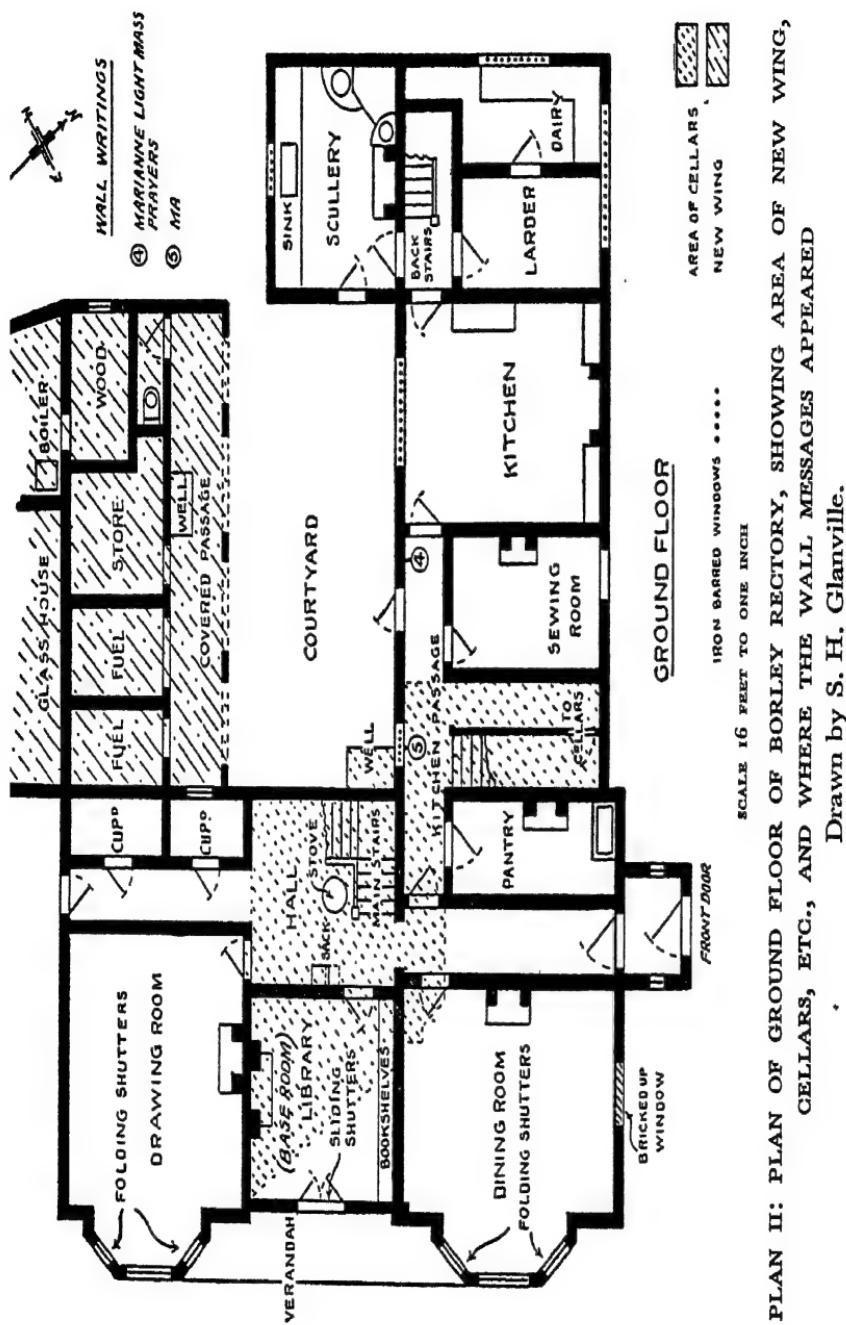
This is a pretty story—with some snags: (a) There is no evidence that a monastery ever existed at Borley; (b) there is little evidence that a nunnery ever existed at Bures, though I will refer to this in later pages; (c) coaches, black or otherwise, were not invented until the beginning of the fifteenth century, and were then used only by ladies of the first rank; and (d) there is no evidence at all that nuns were ever immured alive in this country. That girls suffered this cruel death in some parts of the world is well established. During classical times the vestal virgins were immured for unchastity; and burial alive was the punishment meted out, in Egypt, to the 'vestals' of Isis who broke their vows. This question is fully discussed in *The Most Haunted House in England*.

If we can dismiss the legends about the nun we certainly cannot dismiss the lady herself. That she has been seen at Borley, in the grounds or near the house, by many observers is as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow morning. The nun has been seen over and over again by various cultured and intelligent people. And my evidence, in time, ranges from 1885 to 1943. I have the evidence of at least seventeen people that they saw, singly or collectively, the figure or apparition of the nun. Some of my witnesses saw her several times. The coach, too, has been seen by intelligent observers—but no one has yet been able to find any link between nun and coach, except the traditional one.

#### A STRANGE GARDEN

Like the nun who used to haunt Ballechin House, Perthshire,<sup>1</sup> the Borley phantasm does not like being under cover. She prefers the open spaces, though never straying far from the Rectory. Her favourite walk was a long path that skirted the lawn (see Plan I). This was—and still is—known as the Nun's Walk, a name it

<sup>1</sup> See my *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 220–228, and Chapter XX of present volume.



acquired some fifty years ago. Facing the Nun's Walk, on the other side of the lawn, is a large octagonal summer-house, very well built, that was erected by the Rev. Henry Bull for the special purpose of watching the nun (see Plate IV). Nearly half of the upper portion of the structure is unboarded, in order that a very wide angle of view can be obtained by any observer sitting on the continuous seating that runs round the interior periphery of the summer-house. It was here that both Harry and Henry Bull used to sit for hours on end, smoking their pipes, and just watching.

If special arrangements were made for viewing the nun in comfort steps were also taken to prevent her from seeing the inmates of the Rectory at unseasonable hours. Of all the strange things connected with Borley (where everything is strange), one of the strangest is the fact that Henry Bull had the principal window of the dining-room bricked up (see ground-floor plan) because the nun used to stare at them from the drive while they were eating their meals. She used to stand there with her face close up against the glass, wistfully gazing at the inmates. So the Rector had this window (the only one facing north) permanently bricked up. When I first saw the curious sight I at once thought of the Window Tax. But this was repealed in 1851—twelve years before the Rectory was built. (The window is shown in Plate III.)

Though the Nun's Walk was her favourite haunting-ground, she used to frequent the lawn, various parts of the garden, the courtyard, the road outside the house, and, as we have seen, the drive. With one possible exception (to be referred to later in this volume), she was never seen *in* the Rectory. She has been seen in daylight, sunlight, at dawn and at dusk—but never, I think, by artificial light.

In addition to the strange summer-house, there were other unusual things in the very strange garden and grounds of Borley Rectory. One of them was a pseudo-Gothic summer-house that looked most out of place at the end of the garden (see Plan I), a long way from the house. Still stranger was a cats' cemetery, where a collection of dead felines had been interred from time to time. Head-boards, recording the demise of 'Gem,' 'Rollo,'

'Sandy,' and other pets, were placed in a circle, in orderly formation. Then a curious thing occurred. During my tenancy of the place my chief collaborator, Mr Sidney H. Glanville, noticed on one of his observational periods (August 14, 1937) that the head-board of 'Gem' had been removed and flung into the bushes, and that the graves had been disturbed. Some one had taken the trouble to dig up a portion of the cemetery, and an area the size of a small room had been turned over. Near-by bushes and the grass had been trampled upon, and the fresh earth was spread around. As no one had any right to enter the grounds except my official observers and myself, Mr Glanville made some inquiries. No one knew anything about the matter. Obviously a stranger had entered the garden at night and had dug up the area known as the 'cats' cemetery.'

So Mr Glanville thought he would do some digging himself. He and his son Roger redug the whole area and uncovered a lot of large bones—bones that might once have formed part of the anatomy of horses or oxen, but which certainly never belonged to the *Felis domestica*. A few they could not identify.<sup>1</sup> The mystery was never solved. Did the nocturnal digger bury something, or dig up something? Was he removing the traces of some crime? Had his visit anything to do with the Borley story? Was it a human being or a Poltergeist that made such havoc with the cemetery and the garden? We don't know. Anyway, the intruder must have had the strongest of reasons for spending several hours of darkness in a strange garden, working hard and disinterring a few family pets. This is just another of the many Borley mysteries.

Another mystery is in connexion with the main well. This is in the courtyard formed by the rectangular shape of the house, and is of the usual circular bricked type. It is six feet in diameter and eighty feet deep. Mr Glanville, who investigated the well, found that at 61.9 feet his flare and sinker were sucked or blown into a considerable cavity or tunnel leading out of the wall of the well on the side nearest the house. This means, of course, that the level of the water cannot rise higher than eighteen feet from

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIV for a suggested theory concerning these bones.

the bottom. A few feet below the top of the well was a staging made of rotten and slimy timbers, and some of the more adventurous spirits among our observers attempted to use this as a jumping-off ground for sliding down the steel shaft that connects the pump proper with the hand-wheel mechanism at the well-head (see Plate XIII). The object was, of course, to explore the tunnel many feet below. However, the project was abandoned because it would have been easy—fatally easy—to slide down the greasy shaft, but most difficult to have climbed up again. In fact, one man did slip, and nearly fell in, head first.

This brings me to the question as to whether there are underground tunnels under or near the Rectory. A variant of the nun-and-elopement legend is that the young lady traversed the seven miles from Bures Nunnery to Borley by means of an underground tunnel that connected the two. This would have been a feat of the first magnitude. But, as Goethe says, 'Love can do much,' so perhaps we would accept this remarkable walk were we able to accept the legend. The whole point is whether the tunnels exist or not.

I stated in my first Borley book that remains of these tunnels had been found at various places near the Rectory, and that the Rev. G. E. Smith, one of the incumbents, had actually stumbled across a caved-in portion of a tunnel or secret passage in the Rectory grounds. He had the cavity filled in. I also said that portions of a tunnel had been found in the grounds of Borley Place, just opposite the Rectory. I spoke, too, of the apparent 'hollowness' of the road in front of the Rectory. It is a fact that the sounds made by people walking along this road, or horses trotting, appear louder than on other portions of the same road.

When my book appeared I had a number of letters casting doubt on the fact that such tunnels ever existed; or, if they did, then they were ancient bricked sewers, or *cloacæ*, that served for the primitive sanitation of our ancestors. But quite recently the Rev. A. C. Henning, the present Rector of Borley-cum-Liston, has informed me that he had just interviewed a Borley man, a Mr Tarrance, who has not only seen the tunnel, but has actually entered it. The Rev. Harry Bull employed Tarrance (who is still

living) to examine and repair a well in the garden of Borley Place. During the repairs Tarrance came across some brickwork a few feet below the ground. With his pick he forced an entrance through the bricks and found himself in a tunnel, 'high and dome-shaped,' built of two-inch bricks. He explored the passage for some distance, but could not see where it led to, and passed no opinion as to what it could have been used for. But he was certain that it was not a sewer. It was several years ago when Tarrance discovered the tunnel, but doubtless it is still there.

#### FIRST PHENOMENA

After lunch, when we had heard about the Smiths' adventures, and the Borley legends, my secretary and I made a complete and minute survey of the house from top to bottom. We sealed all doors and windows that we could not control personally. We examined the grounds and outbuildings, and sent the maid home. Then we had tea.

After tea, when it was dusk, Mr Wall and I stood at the entrance of the large summer-house—he to watch for the nun, I on the look-out for the strange light said to appear in the window of Room No. 7. Suddenly, after about an hour, my companion declared that a shadow was moving along the Nun's Walk. I too thought I saw the shadow, but could not be sure. I did not see the light in the window.

By this time it was quite dark, so we decided to return to the house. As we were passing under the glass-topped veranda half a brick crashed through the roof and smothered us with splinters. We searched, but found no explanation of the occurrence.

Our first task when we entered the house was again to search thoroughly the entire building from attics to cellars. We found all my seals intact. As we reached the hall again a red-glass candlestick hurtled down the well of the Rectory and smashed at our feet. We ran upstairs again and found that the ornament was one of a pair normally reposing on the mantelpiece of the Blue Room (Room No. 6), one of the bedrooms in which many phenomena occurred. We again searched the place from top to bottom, but found no sign of a living thing. (The house was well

lighted with Duplex paraffin lamps.) Then we were pelted with mothballs, pebbles, bits of slate, etc. All these missiles came from the upper storey, which we again explored without result. Later several of the bells (of the old-fashioned type) rang of their own volition, and we could actually see the pulls moving, though not what was pulling them. Then the keys of the library and drawing-room fell simultaneously to the floor. We could find no explanation of these truly Poltergeist phenomena.

Later that evening we held a séance in the famous Blue Room, with curious results. Under the strong light of a Duplex lamp, we heard incessant raps coming from the wooden back of a large mirror that stood on the dressing-table. By means of the time-honoured code of three raps for yes, etc. (a code that, apparently, all 'spirits' understand), we held a long conversation with an entity which declared it was 'Harry Bull.' Suddenly we heard something fall at the *far* end of the room, the door of which was closed. We investigated, and found that a new cake of soap had jumped out of its dish on the washstand and had fallen heavily on to the edge of the water ewer on the floor, making a deep dent. No one was nearer the washstand than twelve feet away. The séance ended at 4 A.M. on June 13, 1929. The Rev. Harry Bull died in the Blue Room. So did his father and mother.

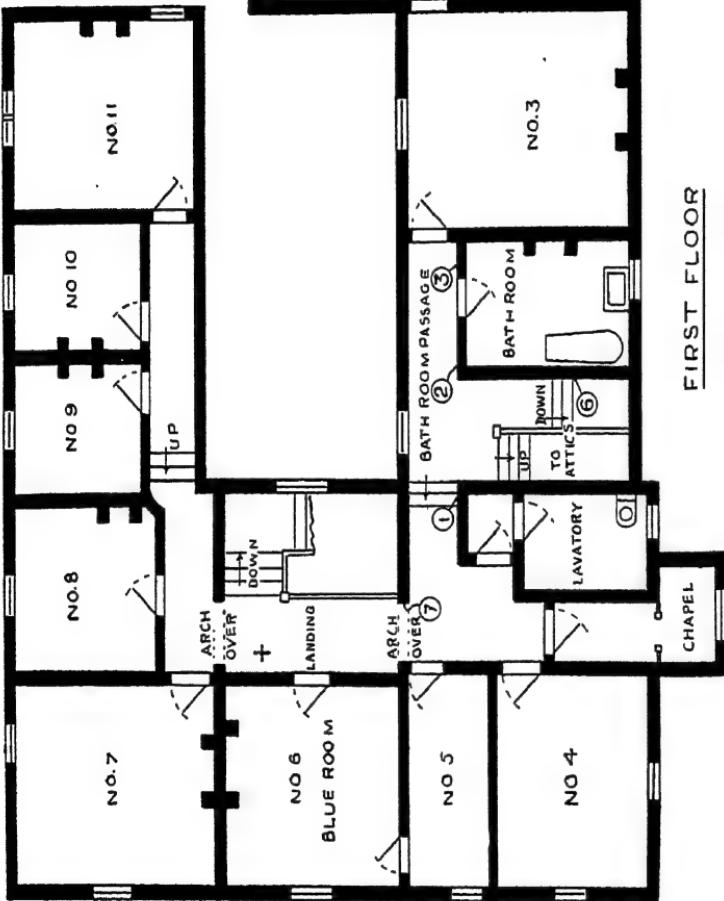
#### SIMULTANEOUS VIEW OF THE NUN IN SUNLIGHT

Next morning I visited the Misses Bull, the surviving sisters of the Rev. Harry Bull, who live at Sudbury. From them I heard accounts of phenomena which they had experienced during their life at the Rectory. Especially interesting was their account of how they met the nun—in sunlight. They were returning from a garden-party on July 28,<sup>1</sup> 1900, and, as they entered the grounds of the Rectory, saw a young woman in the garb of a nun, telling her beads with bowed head, as she half walked, half glided, along the Nun's Walk. The three sisters (Ethel, Freda, and Mabel), then young women, were petrified with fear. They stood by the summer-house and watched her. One of the girls fetched another sister, Elsie. The four of them stood staring at

<sup>1</sup> It is alleged that the nun can *always* be seen on this particular day of the year.

WALL WRITINGS

- ① MARIANNE
- ② MARIANNE PLEASE HELP GET
- ③ MARIANNE AT GIFT LIGHTS
- ④ MASS. AND PRAYERS
- ⑤ EDWIN
- ⑥ GET LIGHT AND MASS
- ⑦ PRAYERS HERE



PLAN III: PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR OF BORLEY RECTORY, SHOWING POSITION OF 'COLD SPOT' (MARKED WITH A CROSS) ON LANDING, AND WHERE WALL WRITINGS APPEARED

Drawn by S. H. Glanville.

SCALE 16 FEET TO ONE INCH

the nun. Then Elsie made a movement as if to approach her. The figure stopped, turned her face towards the group, and instantly vanished. She had 'an expression of intense grief on her face.'

I interviewed, separately, three of the witnesses of this extraordinary phenomenon, and their testimony agreed in every detail. The fault with most ghost stories is that the apparition is generally seen under bad conditions of lighting, and usually by one person only. For an apparently solid, three-dimensional, objective ghost to be seen simultaneously by four people, in sunlight, is concrete evidence that cannot be explained away.

Other phenomena heard and seen at the Rectory by the Bull family include paranormal bell-ringing; raps all over the house; footsteps tramping up and down stairs; and phantasms of various shapes. One night Miss Ethel Bull met a tall, dark man in one of the passages. He vanished. One day the Bull sisters saw a girl in white going to the river Stour. She too vanished. They had many such experiences, all inexplicable.

Miss Ethel Bull related to me an account of some of the phenomena seen and heard by her brother, the Rev. Harry Bull, during his long sojourn in the Rectory. One night he was in the garden, when his retriever, Juvenal, started howling, at the same time 'pointing' at some trees. The Rector then saw a pair of legs moving behind the trees. The upper part of the figure was obscured by the branches. When the figure came into the open he noticed that it was headless! The phantasm passed right through a closed wicket, across the vegetable garden, where it disappeared. Once Harry Bull saw a little wizened old man standing on the lawn. He could see his features very plainly, and he at once realized that the man was identical in every way with an old retainer of the family who had died some two hundred years previously. His name was 'Old Amos,' and he was employed as a gardener. Old Amos was an eccentric character, and an account of his doings, with details of his appearance, was handed down from generation to generation.

Harry Bull also saw, more than once, the famous coach and bays. They always suddenly completely and mysteriously

vanished. Once he heard the familiar clatter of hoofs and rumbling of the wheels on the roadway as he was entering one of the drive-gates. The *sounds* (only) passed him. The reader will learn later how Mr P. Shaw Jeffrey also heard the traditional coach many times while staying with the Bulls at Borley, in 1885–86. Many other people have heard the rumbling of the coach, especially in front of the Rectory, where, as I have stated, the roadway appears to have been built over a tunnel.

#### THE PADDING 'DOG'

As we were in Sudbury, we visited Mr Edward Cooper, who has been in the employ of the Bull family for many years. When they lived at Borley he and his wife occupied the 'cottage' near the Rectory. They told us an astonishing story. Nearly every night, from April 1916, for a period of about three years, when they retired to rest, they heard a pattering sound coming from the adjoining kitchen. It sounded like a large dog padding round the room. One night they heard a terrific crash in the kitchen and thought all their china had been smashed. Mr Cooper leapt out of bed, lit a candle, and ran to the kitchen. But not a thing had been disturbed, and from that night onward the 'padding' noise ceased.

Early one morning in 1919 the Coopers, as they lay in bed, saw a little black shape, in the form of a man, running round the bedroom. As Mr Cooper jumped out of bed the figure vanished. The 'nun' has been seen many times by the Coopers. They have seen her crossing the courtyard, in the road, full-face and side-face. They have seen her walk, but never heard her footsteps. Her perambulations were confined strictly to the immediate vicinity of the Rectory.

The most startling of the phenomena seen by Mr Cooper was the traditional coach. One bright moonlight night he was undressing for bed, and, happening to glance out of the window, he saw lights rapidly approaching the cottage. Wondering what the lights were doing in the Church meadow opposite, he gazed in astonishment as he realized that they were the head-lamps of an old-fashioned black coach drawn by two horses. On the box

seat were two figures in high top-hats. The metal trappings of the horses glittered in the moonlight, and everything was perfectly visible. The coach swept on, through the hedge, across the road, and into the Rectory farmyard, where it disappeared. It was quite noiseless, and passed *through* all obstacles.

#### THE WAITING NUN

About twelve months later I again visited Sudbury, still seeking first-hand evidence for the paranormal happenings at the Rectory. I was directed to the lodgings of a journeyman carpenter named Fred Cartwright, who told me a curious story. He was repairing some farm buildings near Borley and used to pass the Rectory every morning on his way to work, just as it was getting light. This was in the early autumn of 1927, when no one was occupying the house. On the second day he saw a Sister of Mercy standing outside the Rectory by the first (from Sudbury) drive-gate. She looked normal and did not speak, and Cartwright went on his way. He wondered what she was waiting for. This was on a Tuesday. On the following Friday morning, at the same time and place, he saw her again. She seemed tired, and her eyes were closed. But he still thought that she was human. The third time he saw her, at the same hour and place, was on the following Wednesday. She again had her eyes closed, as in sleep, and as he passed her he noticed that she seemed tired and ill. He thought he would ask her whether she needed assistance. He suddenly turned to do so, but she had vanished. She made no sound, and he concluded that she had noiselessly entered the Rectory, which was unoccupied, though he did not know it. The last time he saw the nun was on the following Friday morning, and she was still standing by the drive-gate. As he approached he decided to say 'Good morning' to her. But before he reached the gate she had gone. He did not actually see her vanish, but one moment she was there, the next she was not. Thoroughly puzzled, he opened the gate—with difficulty—and explored the drive and the grounds. There was no sign of her. It was not until he related the incident to his friends at Sudbury that he learned the story of the Rectory.



PLATE II. BORLEY RECTORY BEFORE THE FIRE

Photographed June 12, 1929.

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PLATE III. BORLEY RECTORY (SOUTH-EAST VIEW), SHOWING ONE OF THE DRIVE GATES, BY THE SIDE OF WHICH FRED CARTWRIGHT SAW THE 'NUN' FOUR TIMES

The bricked-up window of the dining-room can be seen to the right of the tree.





## PHENOMENA TO ORDER

I visited the Rectory several times in 1929 and witnessed many phenomena under perfect conditions of control. In addition to the incessant paranormal bell-ringing, I saw showers of pebbles and keys coming from nowhere, and on one occasion a Roman Catholic medallion, and a badge struck during the French Revolution, came tumbling down the stairs in a good light. Also, we managed to obtain phenomena *at request*. We asked the 'entities' to ring one of the house bells for us, and it was rung—under perfect control. When the Smiths moved out of the Rectory to furnished lodgings at near-by Long Melford they kindly kept me informed as to what was happening. Their furniture, stored in the Rectory, was flung about. Once, when they visited the place, all the bells rang simultaneously—whether as a welcoming peal or as a noisy protest at their return was not clear. Sometimes windows in the locked Rectory would be found open, though they had been securely fastened. Once half a fireplace had been removed from one of the rooms, and was found on the main staircase—also the resting-place of lumps of stone which could not be identified. Villagers reported that the window of Room No. 7 of the unoccupied Rectory still 'lighted up' at nights. On their last visit to the Rectory, before they removed to Sheringham, Mr Smith wrote to me, 'We heard the most horrible sounds in the house.'

## POLTERGEISTS START A NEW ERA

It was eighteen months before I again visited the Rectory. For much of this period the place had been unoccupied. But I received reports from my friends and others at Borley, and was kept informed as to what was happening there. Then came the Foysters—and pandemonium! The Poltergeists excelled themselves! The Rev. Lionel A. Foyster kindly asked me to investigate once again, and some members of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (of which I was then Honorary Director) and I visited the Rectory on October 13, 1931. We heard an astonishing story. Not only was there a recrudescence of all the old phenomena (in a much more violent form), but the

Poltergeists devised many new 'manifestations,' all intended to perplex, annoy, or injure the unfortunate residents of the Rectory.

The household consisted of Mr Foyster, his wife Marianne, and a little adopted daughter, Adelaide, who was about three and a half years old at this period. There was also a little boy of the same age. They were a most charming family, and I felt sorry for them. Mr Foyster was a Cambridge man (Master of Arts of Pembroke College), and, being a scholar, set about keeping an orderly record of all the paranormal happenings that occurred. He not only kept a diary, but also wrote up the major portion of the disturbances, in narrative form, under the title of *Fifteen Months in a Haunted House*, as I have stated. I will include some of his amazing experiences in a later chapter.

Having introduced ourselves, we examined the house from top to bottom. I felt quite at home there and noticed few alterations, except that the room over the porch had been turned into an oratory or chapel, with altar, etc., and a stained-glass window.

#### WHAT A RELIC DID

After some refreshments we again examined the house. As we reached the study an empty claret bottle was hurled down the staircase well, smashing at our feet. At the same moment one of the bells rang violently. We rushed upstairs again, but could not account for the phenomena. Then a further outbreak of bell-ringing, and small pebbles rattled down the stairs. Mrs Foyster had retired to rest. Suddenly she called out in alarm. We ran to her aid and found that she had been locked in her bedroom, though, we were informed, the key had been missing for a long time. Mr Foyster was not unduly alarmed, because it was not unusual for his wife to be 'miraculously' locked in in that way. And he had another 'key' that would open the door. He then fetched a relic of Jean-Baptiste Vianney, the saintly Curé of Ars. We all knelt down in the passage (Mrs Foyster kneeling on her side of the door), and the Rector reverently recited a reliquary prayer. Then we all joined in saying the Lord's Prayer, and as he touched the door with the relic we

heard the bolt of the lock suddenly shoot back! It was an impressive ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

Though it was a long time before I again visited the Rectory (I disliked disturbing the Foysters' home), I was always in touch with what was happening there, and was assiduously collecting evidence for the amazing happenings that were of daily and nightly occurrence at the Rectory. Hundreds of these phenomena were recorded in the Rector's diary, a copy of which he sent me. Several pages of it are reproduced in *The Most Haunted House in England*.

I also collected the evidence of other and independent witnesses of the phenomena. Chief among them were Sir George and Lady Whitehouse, whose residence, Arthur Hall, is near Sudbury. They both saw some extraordinary things. Once they visited the Rectory and found the contents of a cupboard strewn all over the kitchen. Then the row of bells began clanging, and they saw pieces of paper, bearing cryptic messages appealing to 'Marianne' for help, which had fluttered down from nowhere. At this period similar messages were found scribbled on the walls —one of the major mysteries connected with Borley (see Plate VI).

Sir George and his wife were making a tour of the house when they suddenly smelt wood burning. They ran upstairs and found the skirting-board of a locked and empty room ablaze. They fetched water from the bathroom and put it out. Then a large flint fell on them; then another, which hit Sir George.

#### A NOVEL EXORCISM

Lady Whitehouse then exorcized the house by means of burning lavender (Mr Foyster usually employed creosote for this

<sup>1</sup> Bessie Roy, the Scottish witch, was accused of opening locks by enchantment. This was in 1590. In the same year John Fean, a more notable sorcerer, was convicted of the same crime, 'by blawing in ane woman's handis, himself sittand at the fyresyde.' For both trials see the *Records of the Court of Justiciary* (Edinburgh in MS.) Among the miraculous faculties attributed to St Columba in the sixth century is that of opening locks without a key: *Ecclesiam sibi non apertam salva sera, sine clave, persæpe reseravit, imprimens tantum Dominicae crux effigiem.* ('He opened the church frequently without a key, by merely imprinting the sign of the cross.') See *Life of St Columba*, by the Irish saint and historian Adamnan (c. 624-704), edited by J. T. Fowler (Oxford, 1894), Chapters 36, 37.

purpose), the immediate result of which was a shower of small pebbles. Then the row of bells began ringing. All this occurred on May 4, 1931.

On the following June 8 Lady Whitehouse again visited the Rectory. As she entered the house things were falling about. Mrs Foyster was in bed, unwell. Lady Whitehouse went up to see her in her bedroom and put her gloves and parasol on the bed. She went to get some clothes when a cry from Mrs Foyster caused her to turn. Her gloves and parasol had 'flown' across the room and were now *on the dressing-table!* Then a small bottle jumped from the middle of the room and fell at her feet. She turned to leave the room when she heard a shriek and found that the Rector's wife had been thrown out of bed—the third time that day.

#### AN ANSWER TO A PRAYER

Lady Whitehouse has a nephew, Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., who has known the Rectory and its successive occupants since boyhood. Between June and December 1931 (the period when the Poltergeists were most active) he paid some thirty visits to the Foysters and saw the most astounding phenomena. He kindly wrote a detailed account of his experiences for my first Borley book.

Among the many manifestations he witnessed was the flight of a brass stiletto that rose from the floor and settled on his lap. He and Mrs Foyster recited the Rosary and sprinkled the rooms with holy water in an attempt to stop the phenomena. This was the day (June 8, 1931) on which Mrs Foyster was thrown out of bed three times. After the stiletto came a vanity case that jumped across the room. Once, when the Foysters were on holiday, and the house was unoccupied, Dom Richard visited the Rectory and found a bed overturned.

Dom Richard Whitehouse was particularly interested in the appealing 'messages,' mostly addressed to Mrs Foyster ('Marianne') and asking for 'light,' 'mass,' 'prayers,' 'help,' 'rest,' etc., that appeared on the walls and pieces of paper dropped about the house. On one occasion he and Mrs Foyster

were examining the walls for 'messages.' One particular piece of wall was *blank*. Returning two minutes later, Dom Richard found that during those two minutes a message had appeared on the patch previously blank. It read: 'Get-light-mass-and-prayers.' Mrs Foyster and the priest then knelt down and, addressing the Holy Trinity, asked where, if the message were genuine, the Mass was to be offered. A few minutes later, on again passing the spot, they found that the word 'here' had been added to the message. (See p. 197.)

Dom Richard stated that he was often a witness of the door-locking phenomenon—sometimes several doors locked (and unlocked) simultaneously, and the keys disappeared and reappeared with perplexing rapidity. Many times Dom Richard has watched the bells ringing when every member of the household was beside him.

#### BOTTLE PHENOMENA EXTRAORDINARY

The most astonishing phenomena he witnessed on Friday, November 13, 1931. Mr Foyster was in London and was not due back until late in the evening. He had asked Dom Richard to stay at the Rectory until his return. While awaiting the Rector, Dom Richard and Mrs Foyster and a young maid (the only domestic kept) had a meal in the kitchen. The two infants had been put to bed. Suddenly a wine-bottle, from nowhere, burst into fragments under Mrs Foyster's chair. Fifteen minutes later a similar bottle smashed under Dom Richard's chair. The maid was kept busy sweeping up the broken glass. Shortly after, as the three of them were standing with their backs to the fire, no one moving, they all saw another bottle materialize in the air above them. First, it was of mushroom shape, then its form changed to that of a bottle. It hovered in the air for a few seconds and crashed to the floor at their feet. Then they heard what they took to be something slowly stamping down the back stairs that led directly into the kitchen. The door was slightly ajar, and, as they watched the door, still another bottle rolled into the kitchen, circled round the room, and stopped—this time without breaking. The astonished onlookers at once searched the upper

rooms, passages, attics, but found nothing unusual. Actually, the bottles came from the cellars.

During the bottle disturbances the bells in the passage were ringing, and even the large bell in the yard (see Plate XX) rang out sharply. Except for some china and other objects thrown about the kitchen, the rest of the evening was fairly quiet.

#### I LEASE THE RECTORY

When the Foysters vacated the Rectory in October 1935 Queen Anne's Bounty decided to sell the house. 'Never again,' they said, 'shall a Borley incumbent live in the place.' I was not aware of this fact until early in 1937, and was patiently waiting for the next Rector to take up his abode. It was on March 13, 1936, that the Rev. A. C. Henning was inducted to the combined livings of Borley and Liston. And it was he who informed me that the Rectory could be leased by a layman. I was overjoyed, and promptly took it for a year.

I had a particular object in view when I rented the Rectory. I wanted to introduce to the place a fresh set of people: people who had never heard of Borley; people who were sceptical, cultured, and educated—preferably of the academic type. I wanted to eliminate from active participation in the case all those—including myself—who had had any contact with the Rectory or its occupants. I wanted to make a fresh start, as it were, with a fresh set of minds, in order to see whether the phenomena would persist under the new scientific conditions that I determined to impose. So I advertised in *The Times* (May 25, 1937) for the 'right' people. I gave some particulars of what I wanted, but did not mention myself or the name of the 'haunted' house. My tenancy began on May 19, 1937.

I had many scores of answers to my advertisement in *The Times*, and had some difficulty in choosing my collaborators. However, I selected about forty men who came up to my standard: university graduates, doctors of medicine, engineers, scientists, etc.—all with a scientific interest in my investigation, and all willing to devote their time, money, and skill in an attempt to solve the 'Great Borley Mystery.' Every member of

the new group was a stranger to me, though some months later a few friends (Dr C. E. M. Joad, B.B.C. officials, etc.) spent observational periods at the house.

#### MY OFFICIAL OBSERVERS

My idea was that the house should be kept under surveillance night and day, inside and out, during the whole of my tenancy. So I formed a rota of observers who, working in couples (usually), took it in turns to visit the Rectory. I fitted up a comfortable Base Room (the old study—see Plan II) for them, with a camp-bed, crockery, lighting and heating, books, some furniture, etc.—modest amenities that were the best we could do, as, of course, the Rectory was then unfurnished. I also issued a specially printed *vade mecum*, a booklet prepared solely for anyone investigating Borley Rectory—surely the first guide to a particular haunted house ever written! Observers were told where they could get meals; what to take with them when visiting the house; how to make out their reports; how to 'investigate'; how to control the house and seal windows, doors, etc.; what to do if a ghost is seen and how to address it, etc.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot, of course, relate here all the strange things that the official observers saw and heard; for this my previous monograph must be consulted. But I will say at once that most of the major phenomena were experienced under scientific conditions. The nun was seen again; many footsteps and similar sounds were heard; raps, taps, and knockings were frequent; there were many paranormal movements of objects, and appearances, disappearances, and reappearances of strange articles; a luminous phenomenon; pleasant and unpleasant odours; sensation of coldness; tactual phenomena; etc., etc.

There were other phenomena, some very striking. For example, a woman's blue coat, old, dirty, torn, and mouldy, suddenly 'appeared' in one of the rooms. We could never find where it came from. Then it disappeared for a time—and suddenly returned. During a séance held by the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr Mark Kerr-Pearse, one of the British pro-

<sup>1</sup> A reprint of the booklet forms Appendix B of *The Most Haunted House in England*.

consuls at Geneva, 'extraordinary noises were heard coming from the kitchen.' On another occasion Kerr-Pearse was alone in the Rectory and was having his evening meal in the Base Room with the door closed. He heard the key in the lock turn. Something had locked him in. The extraordinary thing was that the key was on the inside of the door. Consequently, whatever locked him in *remained in the room*.

Another striking phenomenon was that a fifty-pound bag of coal was moved paranormally, under control conditions, for a distance of eighteen inches. Many scribbles and marks appeared on the walls. On July 28, 1937, Dr C. E. M. Joad saw pencil markings on a wall, which were not there just previously. On May 7, 1938, Mr M. Savage, a B.B.C. television engineer, and a friend named Bowden, reported new pencillings (see p. 217) which 'appeared' *while they actually watched the walls*.

For the hundreds of other phenomena recorded by my observers, the original reports must be consulted. All of these reports are, of course, first-hand, and are signed and witnessed by disinterested—and usually sceptical—people who were complete strangers to me and to Borley when they joined our rota of observers.

#### I VACATE THE RECTORY

My year's tenancy was drawing to a close, and I would have renewed the lease except for the fact that Queen Anne's Bounty was trying desperately to sell the property. So on May 9, 1938, I 'moved out.' That is, I collected all my belongings from the Base Room and handed back the keys to Mr Henning.

A curious incident happened on this my last visit as tenant of the Rectory. A friend of mine, Mr Geoffrey H. Motion, happened to have a very large car, and he and I went to pick up my property at the Rectory. We searched the place from top to bottom several times in order to see whether anything had been left behind. We gave special attention to the floors, and we must have searched the Blue Room (No. 6) half a dozen times. At midnight we made our last inspection, and, as we entered the room with a powerful lamp and a torch, the first thing we saw was something shining on the floor. Motion ran and picked it up.

It was a nearly new (though made in 1864) woman's twenty-two-carat gold wedding-ring. We made many inquiries concerning the ring, but have never found the owner to this day. As a tail-piece to this story I should mention that Mr Foyster records in his diary, under date March 10, 1931 (that is, nearly seven years previously): 'A wedding-ring was discovered in the bathroom.' Next morning it disappeared. We have no means of checking whether the two rings were, in fact, one and the same.

Apparently little happened at the Rectory during the next few months; or if there were phenomena we never heard of them—with two exceptions. A clergyman friend of the Bull family happened to be passing the Rectory in the autumn of 1938 when he heard 'an awful noise as though a lot of furniture was being thrown about.' He reported the incident to Miss Ethel Bull. The Rectory was then unfurnished and unoccupied.

The second phenomenon was noted in November 1938. Group-Captain Carter Jonas and Flight-Lieutenant Caunter were two of our observers during the official investigation, and, happening to be on leave, visited the Rectory one evening. It was, of course, still unoccupied. They told no one they were going. Nothing very startling happened, except that both reported 'an overpowering smell of incense' in one of the rooms.

The next news of Borley I heard through my radio talk. On November 1, 1938, I broadcast an account of my twelve months' investigation of the Rectory phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Among the many letters that I received from listeners was one from a Captain W. H. Gregson, R.E., who informed me that he had bought the Rectory, which had been renamed 'The Priory.' He said he intended to take up residence there in a few weeks' time. He asked me whether I could tell him anything about the rumours concerning it. We had some correspondence about the place.

#### THE RECTORY BURNT OUT

I heard no more about Borley until the News Editors of, respectively, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard* rang

<sup>1</sup> I also broadcast a preliminary account of our investigation in November 1937. See my article 'A Really Haunted House,' *The Listener*, November 10, 1937.

me up on the afternoon of February 28, 1939, to say that the Rectory had been destroyed by fire at midnight the previous day. Did I know anything about it? I did not; and I at once wrote to Captain Gregson for particulars.

In a long letter the Captain told me all about his trouble. It appeared that on the night of February 27, 1939, Gregson had been sorting out books in the large hall. A stack of them suddenly fell, though apparently firmly placed, and knocked over a paraffin lamp which flooded the place with oil and ignited. Captain Gregson, realizing he could do nothing single-handed, ran to the nearest telephone and rang up the Sudbury fire brigade. By the time they arrived the place was well alight. However, the fire was extinguished eventually, but the whole of the upper storey and attics were burned out and all the lower rooms were damaged. In fact, the place was gutted. Captain Gregson was not actually living in the house, but was staying in the cottage once occupied by Cooper. It will be remembered that—eleven months previously—a Planchette ‘entity’ threatened to burn down the Rectory.<sup>1</sup> (The exact wording of the threat is given at p. 119.)

In his letter Gregson spoke of the strange things that had happened at his new home during his few weeks’ occupation. There was a shallow well-tank in the cellar (see p. 237), and in order that his two young sons should not fall in it, he placed a heavy wooden hatch-cover over the mouth of the well. But the morning after he placed it in position it was found some distance from the well-mouth. Something had pitched it off. Every door had been locked the previous night, and entry—normal entry—was impossible. The wells in the cellar were, later, to play a major rôle in the Borley drama.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. G. Eric Smith told me of a strange incident connected with the fire. In a letter from Sevington Rectory, Ashford, Kent, dated May 9, 1939, he says: ‘By the way, while on the topic of Borley, I want to tell you of the strangest coincidence. On February 27 [the night Borley Rectory was gutted by fire] we knew nothing of what was happening at Borley, but we very nearly had a conflagration in *this* house: lighted coals fell on the floor, and we remarked what a curious thing: the house might have been set on fire. Do you think a presence came this way while Borley was going up in flames? Really, Mrs Smith and I have never known such happenings before.’

## THE TERRIFIED SPANIELS

Captain Gregson spoke of other strange phenomena that he and his two boys had seen or heard. The Captain had a black cocker spaniel. One night he was taking the dog across the courtyard when he (the Captain) heard footsteps at the far end of the yard. The steps passed over a wooden trap-door, making a considerable noise. Gregson paused, and the dog stopped dead 'and positively went mad. He shrieked and tore away, still shrieking, and we have not seen or heard of him since. I searched the yard, but no one was there.' He purchased another spaniel puppy. One night he was taking it across the courtyard when the dog behaved exactly as its predecessor had done. It bolted, shrieking, and was never seen again.

This same courtyard was the scene of another strange incident. At four o'clock in the morning after the fire the local policeman asked Gregson who were the 'lady and gentleman, in cloaks,' whom he had seen coming out of the Rectory during the fire. The Captain told him that there was no one on the premises except himself. But the constable was certain he had seen the two 'strangers' leave the burning building and cross the courtyard. When I visited the Rectory later in order to take some photographs<sup>1</sup> of the blackened ruins some villagers told me that two figures were seen at the upper windows when the Rectory was actually blazing. One appeared to be a young girl, the other was merely a 'formless figure.'

## THE GHOSTS SURVIVE THE FIRE

The fire did not, apparently, destroy the ghosts, and some of the most remarkable evidence for the haunting of Borley Rectory concerns a figure seen in the ruins a month after the place was destroyed. Miss Rosemary M. Williams, of Borley Lodge, and Mr C. G. Browne, of Pound Hall, Long Melford, were, with some friends, examining the Rectory by moonlight on the night of Sunday, March 26, 1939.

Miss Williams and her friend were standing on the Nun's Walk gazing at the blackened Rectory when both saw 'a small

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced as Plate VII in *The Most Haunted House in England*.

woman in the upstairs room, which you term the Blue Room.' (I am quoting her report.) 'I had the impression of some one in a light buff-coloured coat, but as the figure approached the window, I could see it was a woman clothed in blue. She remained for several seconds and then turned towards the wall and, as it seemed, walked through it.' Mr Browne confirmed Miss Williams's statement.

As a matter of fact, the floor of the Blue Room had disappeared, and if any girl, incarnate or discarnate, was at the Blue Room window she must have been standing on nothing, except, perhaps, some charred and rotten rafters. And no human being could have climbed up to the window under the existing conditions. The whole of the upper portion of what was left of the Rectory was in a very unsafe condition, and Captain Gregson put up 'Keep Out' notices warning people that they entered the building at their peril. Most of the upper walls, gables, tower, veranda roof, etc., did eventually collapse, helped by the wind.

I visited the Rectory once more during 1939 (June 21), on the occasion of a 'psychic fête' held in the grounds for the purpose of replenishing the funds of Borley Church.<sup>1</sup> I wondered, as I stood by Henry Bull's strange summer-house, in the shadow of a large cedar of Lebanon, whether my observers would ever again keep their nightly vigil on the Nun's Walk or perambulate, in couples, the rooms and passages—or what was left of them—of the desolate-looking Rectory. I thought not. But I was wrong in thinking that I should never again set foot in 'the most haunted house in England.' Though I was unaware of it at the time, my interest in the Rectory and its phenomena was destined to be sustained for at least another six years.

Well, I have done my best to epitomize the chief contents of *The Most Haunted House in England*. But I have really only scratched the surface of the almost incredible story of Borley Rectory. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of 'incredible' is 'impossible to be believed.' But we *must* believe it. How can we *not* believe the dispassionate testimony of *two hundred witnesses*

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, June 22, 1939, for account.

(to say nothing of the two spaniels) who have seen and heard the wonders I have described? Witnesses who are intelligent, educated, sceptical, and disinterested? Every person who has resided in the Rectory since it was built in 1863, and practically every person who has taken the trouble to investigate the alleged 'miracles' for himself, has sworn to incidents that can only be described as paranormal. It is all a question of evidence, and I am reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne's remarks concerning the phenomena he witnessed through the mediumship of D. D. Home: 'These marvels . . . throw old ghost-stories quite into the shade; they are absolutely proved to be sober facts by evidence that would satisfy us of any other alleged realities.'<sup>1</sup> Sir Ernest Jelf and Sir Albion Richardson, K.C., C.B.E., discuss this question in great detail in a later chapter. (See pp. 321-325.)

Though I have given a recital of the principal phenomena recorded at Borley, I reiterate that in the original monograph these phenomena are carefully criticized, analysed, and discussed, and the controlling conditions under which the manifestations were witnessed are described in detail. It is these minutiae that make the evidence so impressive. In addition, the volume contains a complete list of observers, with signed statements; minute-by-minute protocols of observational periods; accounts of many of the experiments carried out; verbatim séance records; and a chronological list of events.

It only remains for me to add that the following chapters of this volume form the sequel to, or continuation of, *The Most Haunted House in England*, with new evidence for the haunting of Borley Rectory; a record of recent discoveries; fresh opinions, observations, and interpretations; and much new material not included in my first monograph.

<sup>1</sup> *Passages from the French and Italian Note-books* (1871).

## PRIESTS VERSUS POLTERGEISTS: SOME ATTEMPTS AT EXORCISM

HAVING heard the story of Borley, the reader would be wrong in assuming that this rectory is unique as regards the Poltergeist phenomena witnessed there. There are many alleged Poltergeist-infested rectories, and a whole volume could be written about them. Offhand, I can think of several. The classic case, is, of course, that of Epworth Parsonage, Lincolnshire (December and January, 1716-17), the home of the Wesley family. Other well-authenticated cases are those of Hamstall Ridware (Staffordshire), Watton Priory (Yorks), Patrington (Yorks), Radley (Berkshire), Sydersterne (Norfolk), Ludlow (Salop), Askerwell (Dorchester), Leadenham (Lincolnshire), Asfordby (Leicestershire), Barnack (Northamptonshire), where Charles Kingsley spent his boyhood, and many more. All are dealt with in my *Poltergeist over England*,<sup>1</sup> with many other examples.

Borley Rectory is unique because (a) the manifestations persisted for so many years; (b) because of the variety and violence of the phenomena; (c) because a cultured and educated observer, the Rev. L. A. Foyster, meticulously recorded every paranormal incident that came under his notice; and (d) because of the great number of people who have witnessed phenomena there.

The Foysters—and there are a number of them—have a pleasant custom of circulating a monthly news-letter among themselves, a letter that keeps the family informed of what is happening to its various members. Mr L. A. Foyster prepared one dealing with some of the phenomena that were disturbing his household, and kindly sent me a copy. He also sent me a copy of his diary, in which every untoward event was accurately chronicled, and allowed me to peruse the manuscript of his

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 303-320.

exciting *Fifteen Months in a Haunted House*, a record, in narrative form, of what took place at Borley during the worst period of the 'infestation.' This book will, I hope, be published in due course, and should prove a best-seller. It is from the three documents cited that I have extracted the following amazing incidents. Mr Foyster has neither exaggerated nor dramatized his adventures. In fact, as he remarks in a letter (dated September 16, 1937) to Mr S. J. Glanville, in mentioning his manuscript, 'I have kept to the actual facts of the haunting with possibly even over-scrupulous exactness.' From Mr Foyster's records and from my own observation and inquiries, I have estimated that at least two thousand Poltergeist phenomena were experienced at the Rectory between October 1930 and October 1935, the period of his residence there. It must always be borne in mind that in every haunted house manifestations are much more frequent, and usually more spectacular, when a family is in residence. Ghosts like company. And this applies especially to Poltergeists. And, of course, when a person is actually living in such a house, he is in a much better position to record the phenomena than an observer who merely visits the place occasionally. It can be said, too, that the fact of Mrs Foyster being 'psychic,' or coming from a psychic family, probably induced more phenomena. However, it is only a question of degree, as so many observers have recorded, over a period of many years, incidents identical with those that so worried the Rector and his wife.

As we have seen, on the very day they moved into the Rectory Mr Foyster, his wife, and little Adelaide heard strange footsteps about the house and a voice calling 'Marianne, dear.' A few nights later the Rector heard more footsteps, which he took to be those of his wife. He searched the place, and found that Mrs Foyster was out. A few days later a workman in the house inquired for the Rector, 'as he heard him come downstairs.' But this time it was the Rector who was out. These strange footsteps became a feature of the haunting, and the household got used to them. It was at this period that 'Harry Bull' began to be seen about the house—usually on the staircase—by Mrs

Foyster, who, as I have said, comes from a psychic family. The phantasm was, I think, a subjective one, as no one else saw it. He was always attired in a dressing-gown of a peculiar colour, and never in clerical garb. And he was usually carrying a roll of paper or scroll.

Then came the 'odours.' Sometimes a perfume resembling lavender would permeate the house and especially the Foysters' bedroom. Occasionally a smell of cooking—when no meals were being prepared—would float through their bedroom window between 11 P.M. and midnight—a strange hour! Then crockery began to disappear from the kitchen and just as mysteriously reappear. Were the utensils used for the 'cooking'? Unfortunately, some of the things 'transported' did *not* return. Mrs Foyster had a watch-bracelet. One day, during her ablutions in the bathroom, she removed her watch and put it down beside her. When she had finished washing she found to her amazement that the bracelet portion had been detached from the watch and was missing. It has never been seen since.

Sometimes the Poltergeists were helpful. Occasionally, when a thing was missing, and every one was hunting high and low for it, it would suddenly 'appear' in a place where one almost fell over it. One day Mrs Foyster had lost something and was searching everywhere. As she passed along a passage a door slowly opened. She went to close it, and there, just inside the room, was the missing article.

Very suddenly the wraith of the supposed 'Harry Bull' ceased troubling them. It was seen no more. Also suddenly, the house became very quiet and tranquil—no strange noises, no paranormal footsteps, nothing missing. The Foysters thought that peace had descended upon their home. But it was merely a lull. One day the Rector noticed a book lying on the window-sill of the lavatory. He imagined his wife had left it there. Mrs Foyster also saw it, and thought the Rector had placed it on the sill. Neither disturbed it for some days, until Mr Foyster, thinking it looked rather out of place, removed it to the library. The next day another appeared. Then his wife complained about his untidiness, and it was revealed that neither had placed a book

there. It was taken away. But as soon as one book was removed another appeared in the same place, and this sort of thing went on for some days. Then the Poltergeists tired of the joke. I will add in parentheses that the Foysters did not keep a maid at this period. Just before the book incident a bag of lavender suddenly appeared on the mantelpiece of one of the rooms. No one knew where it came from. It just as suddenly disappeared. A few mornings later the Rector found it in his coat-pocket when he was dressing.

Then jugs began to disappear, together with a teapot. Mrs Foyster, addressing the 'entities,' asked that they should be restored to her. That afternoon she went into the kitchen, and there were the jugs, all in a heap, on the kitchen table. A plate, too, had been returned—and this was *not* asked for! And the teapot was still missing. She again 'asked' for that, and it duly reappeared on the same evening. Then Mrs Foyster thought of her bracelet and audibly requested its return. This time she was unlucky.

As if to celebrate the return of the crockery, all the bells began to ring. The wires of most of these had been cut, but this fact did not disconcert whatever was ringing them. The bells also heralded a spate of phenomena, mostly connected with the books. A pile of hymn-books was found on the rack of the kitchen range, the place where normally plates are heated. Curiously, no one knew where these Durham Mission hymn-books came from. Still more curiously, the church happened to be very short of hymn-books, so they came in useful. Poltergeists can be very helpful—sometimes. However, the 'gift' was marred somewhat by the fact that the Foysters' teapot *again* disappeared.

That same evening, as Mrs Foyster was walking along the passage outside the bathroom, she was struck a terrific blow under the eye, the resultant cut bleeding copiously. Though she was carrying a candle, she did not see what struck her. Her eye was black for some days. The next night, just as the Foysters had retired to rest, things started flying about the bedroom. A large cotton-reel that had stood on the mantelpiece was projected across the room; it struck the wall and fell on their bed. Then

they felt something whizz by their heads and fall with a clatter to the floor. The Rector lit the lamp and explored. The missile was a hammer-head with a portion of the broken handle still *in situ*. The hammer had, apparently, come from the same cupboard in the study in which Mrs Smith had previously found the skull.

After some minor inconveniences—such as pins, with points upward, being found in the chairs the Foysters usually sat on—the ‘entities’ began to show signs of ill-temper. A favourite trick was to place things in passages and dark corners, where people would be likely to fall over them. An old saucepan and part of a lamp, the one resting on the other, were found outside the door of the Rector’s study—and he nearly fell over them. The articles did not belong to the house. Then the long handle of a floor-polisher was found across one of the doorways, and the Rector walked into *that*. Then Mrs Foyster tripped over a tin of bath-salts that had been placed just inside the bathroom door. Then all was quiet for a few days—except, perhaps, for a little intermittent bell-ringing.

On the night of March 5, 1931, the Rector was roused from his sleep by being hit on the head with his own hair-brush. Next day a door-knob was thrown, with some violence, at Mrs Foyster.

The reader can imagine the state of mind of the Rector and his wife at these disturbances. He decided to seek relief and visited a clerical friend, the rector of a neighbouring parish. This gentleman was very sympathetic and suggested exorcizing the Rectory ghosts. For this purpose he gave Mr Foyster some holy water from the well of Our Lady of Walsingham and a form of service to use with it. When the Rector returned home he found that his wife had again been hurt. She had been injured in the neck by a missile that had been thrown at her.

However, she was well enough to assist her husband in the ritual of exorcism, and held the lamp while he went through the various rooms, sprinkling holy water and reciting the prayers.

The Poltergeists were *furious*! In the middle of the ceremony a stone, the size of a man’s fist, was hurled at them and hit the Rector on the shoulder. But they persevered with the exorcism and finally completed the ritual. Then Mr Foyster went to

obtain assistance for his wife, who had not been well and, quite naturally, was suffering from the effects of the 'manifestations.'

When the Rector returned his wife told him a strange story. During his absence she heard a great commotion somewhere in the house. Leaving Mrs Foyster in the kitchen, the Rector explored the rooms. In his wife's private sitting-room he found that a number of her books had been pulled off the shelves, and that every picture in the hall, and those on the staircase, had been thrown down and scattered all over the floor. That same night, as they lay in bed, things were thrown about their room. That was on a Saturday.

It is only fair to the Poltergeists to say that, usually, they left the Rectory's inmates in peace on Sundays, and the same can be said of all Holy Days, and the various festivals connected with the Church. So on Sunday, March 8, 1931, the Foysters had some quietness of mind and body.

But the 'entities' made up for it on Monday! Mr Foyster calls it a 'desperate day.' It was extremely cold, and the plumber's men were engaged in thawing out the pipes. Neither the cold nor the workmen prevented the Poltergeists from 'demonstrating.' Time after time 'strange, heavy objects' kept appearing outside the kitchen door. No one knew what they were, or where they came from. During the afternoon the kindly Rector from the neighbouring parish (the one who had supplied the holy water) paid the Foysters a visit. He saw a stone come rolling down the back stairs, and all the bells gave a merry peal. Or perhaps a peal of defiance. The visiting rector said he would call again on the following Wednesday, with incense and holy water, and hold another service, with exorcism.

Perhaps the Poltergeists overheard his promise—or threat—because pandemonium reigned for the remainder of that day. The Rector records the following incidents:

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 1931

A log of wood rolled along the passage.  
A stone was thrown at Mrs Foyster.

A heavy piece of iron was thrown at Mrs Foyster, who actually saw the object being 'carried' along, but saw nothing that was carrying it.

A stone was thrown at the Rector.

And Mrs Foyster found a small pile of stones under her pillow when she awoke the next morning. The Rector did not get to sleep until 3 A.M.

Tuesday was fairly quiet, except that a stone was thrown (from inside the house) at a large window in the hall, completely smashing it; and at night Mrs Foyster stumbled over a brick that had been placed outside the bathroom door. The next morning Mr Foyster found a couple of pebbles under *his* pillow.

True to his promise, the sympathetic rector from the neighbouring parish arrived on the next morning (Wednesday) and brought a clerical friend with him. The three parsons incensed and sprinkled and blessed the house from top to bottom, from attics to cellars, and the job was done thoroughly. There were no demonstrations—not until later in the day, when there was some stone-throwing and sporadic bell-ringing. Another clergyman (making the fourth that day) visited the house in the evening, and there was more stone-throwing and a 'regular peal of bells.' Thursday was 'quiet,' except that a lot of clean linen was removed from the kitchen cupboard, and trailed across the floor. The incense, holy water, prayers, exorcism, and the presence of four clericals in the house on one day did not, apparently, produce very good results.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question has often been raised as to whether Anglican and Roman Catholic priests are *permitted* to exorcize without express sanction from their superiors. In *Liturgy and Worship*, edited by W. K. Lowther Clarke, D.D. (London, 1932, p. 480), the matter is discussed: 'With regard to the West, exorcism is still a part of the ministry—in theory at least—both of the Roman and of the Anglican priest. But at present, in most Roman dioceses, the parish priest is required to obtain his Bishop's licence, before he can use the dramatic *Ritus exorcizandi obsecros a demonio* provided in the *Rituale*. . . . R.C. Bishops (also priests, if they are granted a licence) are permitted to exorcize not only the faithful, but also non-Catholics and the excommunicate (Can. 1152). In the Church of England the position is somewhat similar. Canon 72 of A.D. 1604 forbids the parish priest *without episcopal licence* "by fasting and prayer to cast out any devil or devils," under pain of deposition from the ministry. This Canon was passed to put an end to the scandals caused by public competitions in exorcism between rival divines. Some authorities have held that, the language of the Canon being unqualified, not only public exhibitions of the kind indicated are forbidden (except under licence), but even the private use of exorcism in ordinary pastoral ministrations.'

Parenthetically, I will say a few words about exorcisms. They are very seldom effective, or, if so, only temporarily. They seem to annoy the 'entities.' In my *Poltergeist over England* I have cited many cases where priests, Anglican and Roman Catholic, have exorcized—or attempted to exorcize—the disturbing 'spirits.' Practically all were failures, with one outstanding exception. A Miss Ada M. Sharpe occupied a house, 'Beth-oni,' at Tackley, Oxfordshire. Between 1905 and 1908 her home was infested with a Poltergeist that made her life miserable. For three years 'cannon-bursts,' bangs, bumps, flashes of light, hammerings on the roof, footsteps all over the building, apparitions, the flight of bed-clothes during sleep, etc., nearly drove her out of the house. She decided to call in a priest. So on July 12, 1907, the Rev. L. de Clare exorcized the building with prayers, incense, and holy water. The atmosphere of the house immediately changed, and all was quiet—until the following January. Then Miss Sharpe 'heard a dog walking round her bed.' Later, she could not close her bedroom door because something on the other side was pushing against it. Then she found a 'form' huddled up in her bed. She decided to call in another priest. This was the Rev. J. C. Fitzgerald, of the Mirfield Community, who again exorcized the 'entities,' with the usual technique. The phenomena stopped immediately, and, writing five years later,<sup>1</sup> Miss Sharpe tells us that there were no further disturbances.

It is not generally known that the prayers of the Church contain a petition against the Poltergeist or *Spiritus percutiens*, the spirit that produces 'percussive noises.' It is this prayer, I suspect, that the priests used at 'Beth-oni.'<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful if this particular exorcism was known to Mr Foyster and his friends. The Rector himself pinned his faith to creosote, which he burned in the 'disturbed' parts of the house. He claims that they enjoyed some temporary relief through this means. Another method was burning lavender—used, I am afraid, with little success.

But to return to Borley Rectory. On Friday, March 13, 1931,

<sup>1</sup> In a very rare privately printed pamphlet, *A Disturbed House and its Relief* (Oxford, 1914).

<sup>2</sup> Or perhaps they recited the *Visita quæsumus*, a prayer for the divine protection of a house and its occupants.

while the Foysters were having their evening meal, a piece of brick dropped on to the table near the Rector's plate. During a meal on a previous night a potsherd struck Mrs Foyster on the head and made it bleed.

On the following Sunday (March 15) Mrs Foyster found the kitchen table upside down with its legs pointing heavenward; and the contents of the store cupboard were scattered all over the place, both in the kitchen and contiguous passages. As I have remarked, it was unusual for serious disturbances to occur on the Sabbath.

It was about this period that 'horrible odours' were noticed in the Rector's study—and nowhere else—and more stone-throwing was recorded. Mr Foyster was hit several times, though not hurt, but his wife was injured four times—but never when wearing her scapular.<sup>1</sup> When she neglected to put it on she was struck.

During these months of torment Mr Foyster came to the conclusion that there were two distinct bands of 'entities' or Poltergeists at work in the Rectory. One group was cruel, noisy, erratic, thievish, demonstrative, cunning, and spiteful; the other set appeared to be more friendly towards the incarnate occupants of the house. Apparently the 'bad' spirits stole the Foysters' property, while the 'good' ones returned it and presented them with a number of things that did *not* belong to the Foysters. For example, a most useful tin trunk suddenly 'appeared' in the kitchen. Its history was quite unknown. A very nice powder-bowl was 'apported' to the bathroom (just before Christmas—a seasonable gesture!), and an expensive gold wedding-ring was discovered in the same place. This, alas, disappeared after a few hours. I have already recorded that Motion and I found a similar ring (perhaps the same ring) in the Blue Room seven years later.

Other things that the Poltergeists deposited in various parts of the house were scraps of paper—many of them bearing 'messages,' both cryptic and pathetic. They were written in a 'rather shaky, childish hand.' They were usually addressed to 'Marianne,' the Rector's wife. On one of these Mrs Foyster

<sup>1</sup> Part of the habit of certain religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church.

wrote 'What do you want?' and left the paper in a prominent position. Next day there appeared on the same paper the word 'Rest' (see Plate XXVI), though Mrs Foyster declared it was 'Pest'! It could be taken for either. Most of these messages were in the nature of a *cri de cœur*. On one appeared the direct appeal: 'Marianne help me.' Underneath Mrs Foyster wrote 'How?' But no answer was forthcoming. Similar messages were found scribbled on the walls. One of these, as the reader will learn, played a major part in the Borley drama.

Among the various strange manifestations witnessed by the Foysters and others (including Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., Mr Mark Kerr-Pearse, and myself) were the door-locking (or unlocking) phenomena. The keys of most of the doors disappeared during the incumbency of the Rev. G. Eric Smith. Some of these returned as mysteriously as they vanished. When the Foysters took up their residence at the Rectory in October 1930 there was hardly a key in the house. However, that fact did not prevent the doors from being locked—paranormally. The doors became locked at the most inopportune moments: just as the Foysters were about to retire for the night and tried to enter their bedroom; when they were due to receive visitors, and the front door refused to open; when the Rector wished to work in his study; and so on.

I have already recorded how I took part in an 'unlocking' ceremony on October 13, 1931, when Mrs Foyster was locked in her bedroom. On this occasion entry was secured by means of a relic belonging to the Curé d'Ars. It appears that the Rector possessed two relics, one connected with St Jean-Baptiste Vianney, the *curé* I have mentioned, and another of the history of which I am ignorant. Not very surprisingly, both of these relics once 'disappeared' and returned in the usual unorthodox manner.

I do not know the mechanism by means of which miracles occur through application of relics. It may be simply faith which, if it can 'move mountains,' can also unlock a door; or it may be prayer, or both. Carlyle says that 'all miracles have been wrought by thought,' and there is a French proverb to the effect

that 'there are no miracles for those who have no faith in them.' The Foysters *had* faith, and the miracles happened.

As for Jean-Baptiste Vianney (1786-1859), his own life was full of miracles—and Poltergeists, which plagued him for thirty-five years. Loud knocks on his gate, a storm of blows on his furniture, sounds as of a horse galloping in the hall below his room, and similar disturbances were frequent. Once, he declared, as he lay in bed, the 'devil' pushed him about the room all night!<sup>1</sup>

I do not know the nature of Mr Foyster's 'relic.' I always associate relics with bones, but I am probably wrong. However, the Rev. Father Gay, of the Catholic Presbytery, Kelvedon, Essex, has something to say about both the good *curé* and his relics. Father Gay was discussing the Borley case:

The Curé d'Ars was an exceptionally ascetic priest, credited with magnificent—almost incredible—curative work for both souls and bodies. He was canonized by Pope Pius XI as recently as November 1, 1924, and his feast is kept on August 9. He is regarded as the patron saint of the secular clergy. At one time during his life strange things happened in his own residence—noises and patterings and ghostly visitations. These were attributed to Satan, but the Saint triumphed over all his machinations. . . . The so-called relic may have been only one of the things associated with the Saint, which are often given to visitors to the shrine, such as splinters from the confessional.<sup>2</sup>

Well, I have merely scratched the surface of the Rev. L. A. Foyster's invaluable records. For a full appreciation of the many strange happenings in that Poltergeist-infested Rectory, the reader must consult the records themselves when they are published.

I can hear the sceptic muttering such adjectives as 'impossible,' 'incredible,' 'outrageous,' and so on as he peruses my very abbreviated list of 'miracles.' If he is more vocal he will loudly declare that the whole thing was a trick; that the Foysters were hoaxed (for five years?) and that the alleged phenomena

<sup>1</sup> See *Le Curé d'Ars*, by Alfred Monnin (Paris, 1861), and the English translation, *Life of the Curé d'Ars* (London, 1862).

<sup>2</sup> The *Essex County Standard*, December 28, 1940.

were due to normal causes. As Joseph Glanvill wrote, 'That is the eternal evasion!'<sup>1</sup> Again, to quote Glanvill:

These things were not done long ago, or at a far distance, in an ignorant age, or among a barbarous people; they were not seen by two or three only of the Melancholick and superstitious . . . they were not the passages of a Day or Night, nor the vanishing glances of an Apparition; but these transactions were near and late, publick, frequent, and of divers years continuance . . . and acted in a searching incredulous Age: Arguments enough, one would think, to convince any modest and capable reason.

But I have an argument much stronger than Glanvill's: *Mr Foyster was but one out of about two hundred witnesses* who vouched for similar phenomena at Borley. Much of this evidence has already been published in my *The Most Haunted House in England*. For the sake of posterity—especially sceptical posterity—I will record, in the next chapters, the further testimony for the haunting of Borley Rectory that I have accumulated since my first book was published in 1940.

<sup>1</sup> *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), recording the 'Drummer of Tedworth' Poltergeist case.

## CHAPTER III

### AN EXCITING NIGHT

MY first new witness is Mr G. P. J. L'Estrange, of 'Nazareth,' 119 Beccles Road, Bungay, Suffolk. He is interested in haunted houses, and, since Mr Foyster was aware of this fact, he was invited to visit Borley Rectory with some friends. He publicized his adventures and has kindly sent me an abridged account of his report that appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* for December 24, 1942. Here it is:

#### THE HAUNTED RECTORY

A good many years have passed since my adventure in the 'most haunted house in England,' an account of which I broadcast<sup>1</sup> some time ago, but I have so often been asked to repeat the story that I need offer no apology for relating it here.

As much has been written about that weird house since it was destroyed by fire, I am revealing no secret when I disclose that it was Borley Rectory, which stood on the border of Suffolk and Essex. It was in the early days of 1932 that the Rector, hearing of my interest in haunted houses, invited me to visit him and give my opinion of the phenomena. I accepted gladly, for intriguing news of the uncanny happenings at the Rectory had already been featured in the London Press, although care was taken to keep the whereabouts of the house a secret.

I arrived at the Rectory in the early darkness of a January afternoon,<sup>2</sup> and was immediately struck by its gloomy appearance. It was exactly the sort of place one associates with ghosts. A large mansion (it was once the residence, I believe, of a well-known titled family<sup>3</sup>). It had barred windows set in its red-brick walls, and a pinnacled tower stood over the main doorway. The house was approached by a gravel drive, bordered with trees and shrubs, and I remembered that (according to reports) a phantom coach had been both seen and heard in the grounds at various times.

I was getting out of the car which had brought me from Colchester, when I noticed a tall figure standing quite still in the angle

<sup>1</sup> In 'In Town To-night,' December 26, 1936.—H. P.

<sup>2</sup> January 23, 1932.—H. P.

<sup>3</sup> This is incorrect.—H. P.

between the wall and the porch. It did not seem to be a shadow, though it was rather dim, and I called the driver's attention to the form.

'Wait a minute!' I said, and strode towards the wall, but the figure vanished when I was within a few feet of it. Returning to the car, I took up the same position as before, but the apparition did not reappear. 'It looked just like a man in robes,' I thought, and suddenly recalled that the Rectory stood on the site of an old monastery.<sup>1</sup>

A few minutes later I was enjoying a cup of tea in the Rector's drawing-room, while he and his wife told me about their experiences. 'I never believed in ghosts until I came here,' said my host, 'and used to laugh at the stories people told about this house. Since then I have discovered it is anything but a subject for laughter.'

He went on to tell me about the appearances of unearthly forms in and outside the Rectory, lights which flickered in the windows of unoccupied apartments, mysterious footfalls and whisperings in the corridors, and the inexplicable writings which were found on the walls of certain rooms and passages.

'One day, while I was in my study,' he declared, 'I saw a pencil rise from my desk, and scrawl words on the wall. No hand was visible.'

It appeared that the ghostly intruders had not even stopped short of physical violence. Missiles of all sorts had been hurled at the Rector and his wife. The latter, indicating a bruise on her forehead, told me she had received it from a shadowy figure encountered in a corridor at night. 'It was like a blow from a man's fist,' she asserted, 'but it was no living man I saw.'

Then the Rector related how the earthenware ewer from the toilet set in his bedroom had been thrown at him while he was sleeping. 'It hit me on the head, and I woke up to find it lying beside me,' he said. Two or three times, I was informed, rooms had been set on fire and the doors locked in some unaccountable way.

While I was listening to these almost incredible stories we were all startled by a loud crash in the hall. 'They're at it again!' groaned the Rector. Jumping up, I hurried to the door, and found the floor outside littered with broken crockery. The Rector, who had come to my side, looked miserably down at the wreckage. 'These things came from the kitchen dresser,' he sighed. 'You can see how impossible it would have been for anybody to fling them down here and get out of sight so quickly.'

<sup>1</sup> This is doubtful.—H. P.

He was quite right, but I was not yet convinced that trickery was out of the question.

We went back to our seats after the mess had been cleared away, but an appalling series of crashes soon took us back to the doorway. The sight we witnessed made me wonder for a moment if I were dreaming.

Bottles were being hurled about in all directions in the hall, though nobody could be seen throwing them. Appearing suddenly in mid-air, they would hurtle through space and smash to pieces on the floor or against the wall. One large wine-bottle missed my left ear by about an inch.<sup>1</sup>

‘Where on earth are they all coming from?’ I gasped.

The Rector explained that they had been stored in a shed outside, but could not tell me how they got into the house. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘the doors are locked, and every window is bolted.’ All the same, two or three dozen bottles lay on the floor, mingling with broken china and earthenware, before there was a lull in the commotion. My host’s face was careworn as he turned to me: ‘You haven’t seen half!’ he announced.

We then made a tour of the whole house, the Rector pausing in many of the rooms to tell me about the strange things which had occurred there.

‘Now, a friend of mine got a nasty shock in this room,’ he continued, opening a door. ‘He was sleeping here, and woke up to see a figure, all in white, standing at the foot of the bed. Feeling certain it was a practical joker, he sprang up and made a grab at the form. Next instant he received a fearful blow over one eye, but his outstretched arms met with no resistance when he tried to grapple with his assailant. His hands went right through the thing, whatever it was.’

I decided to spend the night in this room.

As we went out on to the landing again there was a loud ringing of bells downstairs. The Rector beckoned me to the banisters, and, leaning over, I could see that all the bells in the kitchen passage below were clanging wildly at the same time, while my hostess and the one maid who had not refused to remain in the house looked on helplessly. There were about thirty of these bells, so the din can be imagined, and I had to shout the question I put to the Rector.

<sup>1</sup> Captain W. H. Trinder, the well-known dowser, writing on November 6, 1940, from Lower Close, Quenington, Gloucestershire, says: ‘One point strikes me, about which you have made no comment, and that is that as far as I can see from the photographs and plan, the only place from which bottles, etc., could have been thrown down on the iron stove in the hall, is that on the first landing known as the “Cold Spot.”’ —H. P.

'We cannot explain it,' he replied. 'The wires of all but three have been cut.' We returned to the hall.

The bell-ringing continued for some time. At my hostess's suggestion, I tried to communicate with the unseen entity responsible. 'If,' I cried, looking up at the bells, high above our heads, 'some invisible person is present and can hear my words, please stop those bells ringing for a moment.' Instantly, every bell became still. I do not mean that they gradually slowed down, as one would expect. It was as though each had been seized and held by a hidden hand.

Encouraged by this, I attempted to obtain a message by means of a code. I was not very successful. True, a name was spelt out—a name which was known in that house—but the Rector was not inclined to pay any attention to it, and after that the bells fell silent. 'I am certain these disturbances are caused by devils,' declared my host, as we went back to the drawing-room.

A little later I sat alone before the fire, while the Rector attended to some work in his study, and his wife helped her maid to prepare a meal. With a small oil-lamp by my side, I was making notes of the evening's happenings, when I heard cautious footsteps enter the room. A chill ran down my spine, but I did not look round until the footsteps paused behind the settee on which I was seated. Then I turned quickly. There was nobody to be seen, but the footsteps passed on and seemed to go through the wall at the far end of the room.<sup>1</sup>

Later I learned that there had formerly been a door in that part of the wall.

Space forbids me to give details of everything I saw and heard during that eventful night, but I must mention an incident which happened after supper. I was talking to my hostess in the dark hall, when she lifted a finger, and I heard the sound of laboured breathing on the stairs. We stood listening for about half a minute, and then I suddenly flashed my electric torch. No other person was in sight, but the noise ceased, and it was not resumed when I switched off the light.

Much more might be told, but I must pass now to the final manifestation I witnessed after I had retired to my bedroom, accompanied by certain friends of the household, who had arrived late. Some time after midnight the air seemed to get much colder<sup>2</sup> within a few minutes, and I could see something luminous on the other side of the bed. As I watched it the patch of luminosity got

<sup>1</sup> Compare this auditory sensation with the 'footsteps' heard by Mr and Mrs Gilbert Hayes, Mr Arthur Medcraft, and many others.—H. P.

<sup>2</sup> A frequent phenomenon at Borley Rectory, which was an abnormally cold house.—H. P.

larger and denser, until it roughly resembled the shape of a human being in long robes, though neither features nor limbs were discernible.

I got up from my chair and addressed the figure, but there was no reply. Still speaking, I went towards it, and had a curious feeling that an attempt was being made to push me back. I resisted it, but at last came to a standstill, and had as much as I could do to maintain my ground.

'Won't you let me help you?' I asked, with my throat dry. There was no answer, of course, and I exerted all the strength of mind I could summon to my aid in an effort to dispel the figure. For several long seconds there was no result—and then, slowly, the apparition faded away.

Before I left the Rectory, later that morning, I told my host and hostess that I had a strong feeling there would be no more disturbances. It was obvious they did not share my confidence. Only a week afterwards, however, I received a letter from the Rector in which he declared that no more trouble had been experienced in the house and there was 'quite a different feeling throughout it.' 'I only trust,' he added, 'that this will continue.' Apparently it did, for three years later he wrote again to say, 'This house is now perfectly normal.'

G. P. J. L'ESTRANGE

The Rev. L. A. Foyster records the visit of Mr L'Estrange and his companions<sup>1</sup> in his diary under the date January 23–24, 1932. He confirms Mr L'Estrange's account of the phenomena. He says: 'Great demonstrations! Bottles dashed down back stairs; kitchen passage was strewn with broken glass, etc. Bells rang. Quieted down for a time, but racket started again.'

Mr L'Estrange's companions submitted to the Rector a report of the night's doings, and Mr Foyster includes it in his *Fifteen Months in a Haunted House*. I will paraphrase a few extracts:

During a conversation with the Rector a crash was heard in the passage opposite library door, leading to the kitchen. This was soon followed by another crash. A bell started to ring. Rectory was fitted with wire bells, but all wires were cut with the exception of three: back door, front door, and another room. The Rector remarked that that was the usual method for beginning phenomena for the night, and added: 'I think we are going to have a bad

<sup>1</sup> Members of the Marks Tey (Essex) spiritualist group.

night.' Then there was a third crash, and all ran to investigate. All members of the household were in known localities of the house. Upon investigation, the party found at the foot of the back staircase a quantity of broken glass and bottles. While there, bells were rung and more bottles thrown. Two appeared to materialize in mid-air and crash to the floor. They came one or two at a time as the glass was swept up, but on leaving the pieces where they were no more appeared at that time. The whole house, especially the bell wires, was carefully examined by party. There was considerable confusion at one period when a number of bells were being rung at the same time. Upon the walls were found messages written in pencil, and in one case the writing looked as if the pencil had been snatched away before the completion of the message. The 'request' was, in each case, for 'Light, Mass, Prayer, and Incense.' Shortly after, the phenomena increased and became more violent. Mr Foyster decided to seek relief in prayer. So they all adjourned to the oratory or chapel, taking with them a relic of the Curé d'Ar. Then they proceeded from room to room, making the sign of the Cross with the relic. Phenomena then practically ceased. They decided to spend the rest of the night in the Blue Room<sup>1</sup>—probably the most disturbed apartment in the house. They sat with their backs to the wall, the only light being that of the moon, which was shining through the unshaded window. 'The atmosphere of the house was heavy and supernormally cold.'

During the sitting general conversation ensued, and the disturbing entities were formally asked not to trouble the inmates of the Rectory, 'who were being slowly killed with anxiety.'

About 3 A.M. a black shadow appeared to develop against the wall. It was addressed, and the form slowly dissolved. Later a porridge-bowl was thrown at the Rector's head, passing through his hair and breaking on the floor. Then a short period of calm, after which more bottles were thrown about and a cup and saucer, belonging to the Foysters' best tea service, were broken. One bottle was thrown *up* the staircase. The party broke up at 5 A.M., after more prayers had been offered for the peace of the house.

<sup>1</sup> It is extraordinary what a number of 'Blue Rooms' there are in haunted houses, and how all the major phenomena are centred there. In addition to Borley, each of the following houses possesses—or possessed—a 'Blue Room': 'Beth-oni,' Tackley, Oxfordshire; Ballechin House, Perthshire; Calvados Castle, Normandy; Hinton Ampner, Hants; and Willington Mill, Tyneside. And in a book called *The Blue Room*, by Clive Chapman (Dunedin, 1927), is a vivid account of the Poltergeist phenomena of Pearl Judd, a New Zealand physical medium. (See my *Poltergeist over England*.) In a ghost story, *The Fiddler*, by Richard Hearne, broadcast by the B.B.C. on December 22, 1944, all the phenomena (mostly murders) occurred in the 'Blue Room.'—H. P.

There is confirmatory evidence for the above amazing happenings. Captain V. M. Deane ('The Willows,' Braiswick, Colchester) in an article<sup>1</sup> says:

I have cross-examined the principal witnesses for hours on end, and I have in addition the entire record of the sittings of the Marks Tey circle for the twelve months of 1932, recorded in shorthand at the time. There is not the slightest shadow of doubt but that in full lamp-light showers of bottles and stones fell amongst batches of from three to five percipients, who saw the phenomena with their eyes, heard them with their ears, and handled the apportioned objects with their hands; and, though two of the percipients are now dead, there are still six alive whose evidence cannot be shaken.

Captain Deane discusses the possible causation of the phenomena, and I will include his remarks in a later chapter.

Mr L'Estrange concludes his article by stating that from the night of January 23-24, 1932, the whole atmosphere of the house changed and became more or less normal—at least for a long time. I believe this to be a fact. The manifestations on this exciting night reached a *crescendo* of violence never hitherto attained, and just burnt themselves out.

However, the phenomena did not entirely cease, though I have no record of any incidents comparable in violence with those experienced by Mr L'Estrange and his friends, as having occurred subsequent to the visit of the Marks Tey circle. Whether, in fact, the presence of the spiritualists did have a beneficial effect, I do not know. But it is a fact that the house became quieter, the phenomena less frequent and violent, and the atmosphere of the place more peaceful. During my lesseeship of the Rectory in 1937-38 my official observers recorded many more types of manifestations than were experienced by the Foysters, but few of them were noisy or violent, and none dangerous. It can be said without fear of contradiction that the Foyster occupation coincided with the noisiest, most violent, and most dangerous period in the whole recorded history of the Borley manifestations. And at no other period did those pathetic messages appear on the walls, or, inscribed on paper, flutter down from the ceilings.

<sup>1</sup> 'Borley Rectory Problems,' in *Psychic Science* (London, April 1941).

As I have stated, the phenomena that were recorded after Mr L'Estrange's visit were few and far between. But they were interesting nevertheless. During the June following some objects were thrown (as Mr Foyster records in his diary). Later in the year there was a strange incident with the lamp. Mrs Foyster happened to be unwell and had gone to bed early. The Rector had gone into the garden for something, and the maid had taken the two little children to a party. When Mr Foyster returned to the house it was quite dusk, and he at once went straight to his wife in order to light the lamp in her room. To his astonishment the lamp *was* alight! ‘“Did you light it?”’ I asked in some surprise, not thinking she was well enough to do so. “No,” she replied, “some one lit it. I don't know who it was. I woke up just in time to hear the retreating footsteps.”’ The Rector was much mystified as his wife was then alone in the house.

During June 1933 the Rector records: ‘I hear strange noises in the house that I cannot account for, but nothing further follows.’

‘During 1935,’ says the Rector, there were some indications of ‘a little trouble starting up again.’ A few things disappeared in unaccountable ways. On August 5 of that year a noise like a picture falling in the drawing-room was heard. Investigations revealed that nothing was out of place. Mr Foyster concludes his diary: ‘These noises continued at intervals, some appearing to come from upstairs. Altogether, we heard the bangs thirteen or fourteen times.’ The Foysters vacated the Rectory in October 1935.

I think that there is ample evidence to show that during the latter part of Mr Foyster's incumbency the Poltergeists had not vanished, but were merely quiescent. It needed only the necessary stimulus for them to become active again. This stimulus was forthcoming when my official observers began living in the Rectory during the years 1937-38.

CHAPTER IV  
ANOTHER 'CLOUD OF WITNESSES'

SOME two hundred reviews and Press notices of *The Most Haunted House in England* were published in this and other countries, and more than one writer quoted the New Testament phrase<sup>1</sup> that heads this chapter. Since my book appeared many more 'witnesses' have sent me reports on their recent experiences at Borley Rectory, even though the house was then merely a blackened ruin, and fast disintegrating into a heap of rubble. I will now publish some of these reports. I must emphasize that my correspondents are still strangers to me. I have never met one of them, with the exception of Mr Harry Marshall, of Trinity College, Oxford, whom I have seen once or twice during my lectures at the University; and the Rector of Borley-cum-Liston, whom, of course, I know well.

THROWN BY A POLTERGEIST

Because the phenomenon is, I believe, unique in the annals of Borley's psychic history, I will first submit the strange story of how Mr H. F. Russell, of 73 London Road, Chelmsford, was 'attacked' by a Poltergeist, in broad daylight. Poltergeists are not supposed to attack people, or harm them. But at Borley, they *do*—as the reader is aware.

Mr Russell is a distinguished and well-known business man. Among his many activities, he was Acting Chairman, and Manager in England, and for the whole of Europe (except France) and all the British Empire (except Canada), of one of our famous cable companies. That will convey to the reader some idea of the qualities possessed by Mr Russell, who was also connected with several other cable companies. I need say no more, except that he was educated mainly in Rome, Florence, Brussels, and Louvain, and speaks several languages fluently.

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Hebrews xii, 1.

On November 15, 1941, Mr Russell sent me the following letter:

Last Wednesday (November 12) we all paid a visit to Borley Rectory, impelled thereto by your book, which we all read and quote *passim*. . . . We left the car on the opposite side of the road, and two of my boys, home on leave, at once entered the house and had a good look round. I followed some twenty yards behind when I was suddenly seized (so I imagine) and, despite my attempts to keep the vertical, was dashed to the ground. I felt an unseen, unknown power trying to throw me down, in which it succeeded, and I landed in a pool of mud which necessitated the sending of some clothes to the cleaners. I am not in the habit of falling about.

Mr Russell has three officer sons in the Royal Air Force. The two who accompanied him were—then—respectively Wing-Commander and Squadron-Leader.

I wrote to Mr Russell, enclosing a plan of the Rectory and grounds, and asked him to mark the exact spot where he was thrown. In his reply (December 7, 1941) he says:

Now to return to the 'tripping-up,' I was so flabbergasted by the event that it may have shaken me out of my usual calm. I have had no opportunity of conferring with my airmen sons, whom I wanted to consult as to the exact spot of the tumble, but it was, I think, to the right of the plan you sent me and more in the entrance to the farm. Strange to say, this rather strengthens the evidential side of my incident, as I had the feeling that some force was 'ejecting' me, as with the injunction 'Get out!' I have not the gifted powers of description that Priestley has, or I might put it all better.

The place where Mr Russell was thrown was near the entrance to that part of the grounds where the stables were situated—nearly opposite the main gate on the road leading to Borley Green (see key plan).

I have noted that 'ghosts' seldom throw people, and that Mr Russell's experience is unique, as regards Borley. But the Rev. Joseph Glanvill, F.R.S., the distinguished divine and philosopher, records a similar case.<sup>1</sup> Curiously, the scene

<sup>1</sup> *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), Part II, pp. 243-244.

occurred at Woodbridge, Suffolk, only a few miles from Borley. One day the Rector of Woodbridge, Mr Broom, was walking through the town with a Dutch lieutenant, who was 'psychic.' The latter suddenly declared that coming towards them was a ghost, and advised the Rector that they 'must give way to it.' Mr Broom said it was all nonsense and refused to move. Before they could argue the matter further both were thrown into the middle of the street, the Rector with a broken knee and the lieutenant with more serious injuries. Compared with the above experience, Mr Russell got off lightly!

#### A POLISH INVESTIGATION

Following an article on Borley Rectory which I wrote for the issue of *Everybody's Weekly* dated August 7, 1943 (though on sale a week earlier), I received a great many letters about the case. Some were sent to me direct; others were addressed to the editor, who forwarded them to me. Two of the latter were of the highest importance as providing further good evidence for the haunting of the Rectory. One of these letters—from Mr Gilbert Hayes—I will deal with in the next chapter; the other I will include here.

On August 1, 1943, Lieutenant G. B. Nawrocki, who is a doctor of medicine and attached to the Polish Army Medical Corps, wrote to the editor, asking for my address. The letter was forwarded to me, and I answered it. In his reply (from 45 William Street, Kirkcaldy, Fife) Lieutenant Nawrocki informed me that a few weeks previously he and some brother officers had spent two nights at Borley Rectory, with most interesting results. An almost minute-by-minute protocol of their visits had been prepared, with times and incidents recorded scientifically. He enclosed the report (which was written in perfect English), which he hoped would be of some use to me. He also mentioned that he knew me by repute, having read most of my books, and had taken an interest in scientific psychical research for many years.

I will now reproduce Lieutenant Nawrocki's report, which shall speak for itself:

## FIRST NIGHT, JUNE 28-29, 1943

*Present:* Colonel J. Wroblewski, O.C. Polish Signal Training Centre; Lieut. W. Kujawa; Second Lieut. A. Ligaszewski; and Lieut. G. B. Nawrocki.

8.00 P.M. The party arrive at Borley Rectory and look outside the ruins.

8.10 P.M. Lieut. Nawrocki enters the Base Room. In the kitchen passage a stone is thrown at him.

8.15 P.M. Remaining members of the party enter Borley Rectory and begin to investigate the ruins.

8.20 P.M. In the kitchen passage a stone is thrown at Lieut. Kujawa, hitting him on the shoulder.

8.30 P.M. More stones are thrown at Lieut. Nawrocki in the kitchen passage (ground floor), in bathroom passage, and in the Chapel on the first floor.

9.05 P.M. When the party was on the first floor the door of the kitchen (which was shut when they ascended to the first floor) opens and then shuts again with a great noise. At this time nobody was on the ground floor.

9.10 P.M. The party decide to spend the night in the dining-room (ground floor) and start to build 'seats,' using bricks found in the garden. The half-burnt drawer from the pantry is used as a table.

10.00 P.M. The party take up their position in the summer-house, waiting for the 'nun.'

11.05 P.M. Lieut. Nawrocki sees a black shadow moving slowly between the trees on the Nun's Walk. The shadow vanished between the second and third tree near the wall.

00.30 A.M. The party return to the dining-room and sit there in complete darkness.

1.00 A.M. Some scratching heard in the corner of the room near the window. In spite of all efforts, the party cannot enter into conversation with the 'scratching ghost.'

1.50 A.M. The scratchings end.

2.40 A.M. Second Lieut. Ligaszewski makes some remark to Lieut. Kujawa, who asks him to be quiet 'because a brick could easily be thrown from the ceiling upon our heads.' He has hardly finished speaking, when half a brick is thrown from the ceiling and falls directly in the centre of the 'table,' making a great noise.

4.30 A.M. Lieut. Nawrocki inspects the house. In the kitchen passage he hears many whisperings, but cannot distinguish any word.

5.15 A.M. The party leave the Rectory.

SECOND NIGHT, JULY 28-29, 1943

*Present:* Lieut. W. Kujawa and Lieut. G. B. Nawrocki; and two English boys.

8.30 P.M. The party enter the Rectory and investigate the ruins from cellar to roof. Two stones thrown at Lieut. Nawrocki (in Blue Room); and at Lieut. Kujawa (in the passage outside the Chapel).

9.00 P.M. Whole party decide to spend the night in the ruins—the Poles in the Blue Room, and the English boys in the kitchen. Lieut. Kujawa and Lieut. Nawrocki 'rebuild' the floor of the Blue Room, and bring in some straw.

10.00 P.M. The watch for the 'nun' begins. The English boys remain in the summer-house; Lieut. Kujawa in the window of the Blue Room; and Lieut. Nawrocki in the window of Room No. 5 (dressing-room of the Blue Room).

11.00 P.M. to 00.30 A.M. Scratchings in the fireplace of the Blue Room. They cease after five minutes. Many stones (twenty or thirty) thrown in the Blue Room and on the ex-landing near the 'Cold Spot.' The stones seem to be thrown from the bathroom passage. Many dull thumps heard coming from the ground floor of the house.

11.15 P.M. Both English and Polish parties have an impression that some one is standing or moving between bushes near the main gate of the Rectory. Investigation shows that no one is there.

11.25 P.M. Lieut. Nawrocki has an impression that some one is walking through bushes near the wall (the left wing of the Rectory). Immediately he sees a shadow moving between the trees of the Nun's Walk. The shadow stops between the second and third tree and vanishes after five to ten seconds.

00.30 A.M. A great thump is heard on the first floor (location unknown). English party come up to investigate the matter. The boys remain five or six minutes in Room No. 5 and then go through Room No. 3, where they see a shadow of a man which vanished very quickly. Hearing their exclamations of astonishment, Lieut. Nawrocki follows them, and, passing the passage leading from Room No. 5 to Room No. 3, suddenly sees a black shape or a shadow of a man silhouetted on the wall of the chapel. The shadow stands there without moving for ten to twenty seconds, and then vanishes very slowly.

2.35 A.M. A dull thump is heard in the house (ground floor).

3.30 A.M. A new, dull, and great thump comes from the ground floor.

6.00 A.M. Lieut. Nawrocki and Lieut. Kujawa leave the Rectory.

(Signed) DR G. B. Nawrocki

In his covering letter (dated August 8, 1943) Lieutenant Nawrocki says: 'I am quite sure that I twice saw the shadow on the Nun's Walk, and once a shadow of a man in Room No. 3.' He asks whether they were the phantasms of the 'nun' and the Rev. Harry Bull respectively. Personally, I doubt whether the ghost of Harry Bull has ever been seen at the Rectory. As for the 'nun,' it is possible that she was 'active' that evening for the following reason.

Although Lieutenant Nawrocki was not aware of the fact, he and his friends, on their second visit, were at the Rectory on the day of the year—July 28—when tradition asserts that the nun *always* 'walks.' Personally, I doubt this, as I have been there on the date mentioned, and so have my friends, with negative results. I think the story gained currency because on July 28, 1900, the Misses Ethel, Freda, Mabel, and Elsie Bull saw the nun *collectively* on the lawn of their home in what amounted to sunlight. I think it can be said that the nun is seldom seen on July 28.

Lieutenant Nawrocki and his friends showed considerable skill in improvisation when they 'rebuilt' the floor of the Blue Room, erected seats and a table, etc. In order to examine the upper floor of the house, they must have laid planks across the rafters on which to walk. It is very significant that many of the manifestations occurred in the Blue Room, where so many phenomena have been witnessed during the past fifty years. Another place where incidents were recorded was in the kitchen passage, on the walls of which many of the 'Marianne' messages appeared. And it was in the kitchen passage where many an orgy of bell-ringing aroused the almost distracted occupants of the Rectory. Stones have been 'falling' in the kitchen passage for many years.

The Chapel, or oratory, was another focus of psychic activity, and it is worthy of note that it was on the wall of this apartment that the shadow of the man was silhouetted.

When Lieutenant Nawrocki speaks of the Blue Room, Room No. 5, etc., he means, of course, the shells of these rooms. A glance at the photographs I took after the fire will show that these rooms were practically roofless. Properly to appreciate

Lieutenant Nawrocki's report, the plans of the house should be studied.

It is interesting to note that on the *morning* of July 28, 1943, Mr Arthur S. Medcraft spent some hours in the Rectory garden, and experienced no phenomena. On his previous visit, earlier in the same month, he was dogged by an invisible walker, heard a door slam in the Rectory, and smelt a strange perfume. His report is included in the next chapter.

#### OXFORD VISITS BORLEY

My next report also refers to a visit to the Rectory, and was sent by Mr Harry Marshall and Mr J. H. Russell, both undergraduates of Trinity College, Oxford. Marshall is the son of Mr J. R. Marshall, K.C., D.L., the distinguished Scots jurist.

The two students visited Borley from January 3 to January 6, 1944, though actually they spent only ten hours on the Rectory premises. This short period was due to the delay in obtaining the necessary permission to investigate, the ruins having just previously changed hands. However, a major reason for their visiting Borley was to obtain photographs of constructional details of the fabric—or what was left of it—and in this they were very successful, Mr Marshall securing fifty photographs (some of which are included in this volume). The fact that, owing to the fire, etc., daylight had penetrated into the places (*e.g.*, the cellars) formerly in darkness, made photographing easier. But some pictures were taken by flashlight. Harry Marshall and his camera were only just in time, as even then demolition work had begun in a modest way.

The phenomena they experienced were neither spectacular nor numerous, but one or two incidents were worthy of record. On the Tuesday morning (January 4), on their first visit, 'we heard a crash in a cellar below us. We were at least six feet from the point, over a bit of iron gutter, which we believe was hit by a bit of brick. We both think that we did not kick anything of a sufficient size to produce the noise.' Mr Russell, who sent me an independent report, mentions the incident and remarks: 'As neither of us was directly above, or, in fact, near any of these

objects at that time, we thought it rather odd, particularly as we thought we should have noticed kicking a stone of the size which we found by trial to be necessary to cause the noise.'

A more puzzling incident occurred at 5.25 on the afternoon of January 5. Russell says:

The only incident occurred in the garden at 5.25 P.M., when we were walking down the orchard away from the house. Marshall was standing on the cart-track, which runs through the orchard from the field beyond the garden, when I heard him call to me and I replied. But he said that he had not spoken. I felt certain at the time that he had called to me, but when he denied that he had spoken I naturally began to doubt whether I had heard him at the time. He was about fifteen yards in front of me.

Harry Marshall, in his report, confirms the incident:

On Wednesday evening Russell was certain I called him. I did not. At the time (5.25 P.M.) he claimed to have recognized my voice. When he knew I had not called him he naturally began to doubt whether he really had heard a voice. He was by the north-east end of the stream in the garden; I was fifteen yards away on the path through the orchard from the road to the fields.

It is significant that Mr Russell was standing by the stream near the Nun's Walk. In fact, one of the variants of the nun tradition is that she committed suicide by throwing herself into this stream. As for 'voices' heard at Borley, this is a common phenomenon. The Rev. G. Eric Smith, one of the incumbents, heard 'sibilant whisperings' on the landing many times—even when he was alone in the house. Once he heard a woman's voice moaning, 'Don't, Carlos, don't!' Mr Smith's successor, the Rev. L. A. Foyster, on the very first day of his residence at the Rectory, heard a voice calling 'Marianne,' his wife's name. Later Mrs Foyster also heard 'voices' in the house. So if, in fact, Mr Russell did hear what he took to be his friend's voice, the phenomenon was not unique.

Another incident which might be regarded as paranormal concerned a bag in which the undergraduates kept their tools and photographic accessories. When exploring the garden they

put it on a shelf in the summer-house, carefully noting the exact spot. This was on Tuesday, January 4, 1944. When, some time later (at 12.25 P.M.), they went to collect their bag it was nowhere to be seen. After some searching they found it on the grass *behind* the summer-house. As the bag was not being 'controlled' at the time, it is possible that the 'transportation' was not a paranormal one, and was due to a mischievous 'entity,' incarnate rather than discarnate. Harry Marshall and his friend recorded other incidents, which they described as 'doubtful.' Once they thought they heard some one in the Rectory; and at 5.42 on the afternoon of January 5 Mr Marshall records: 'Later, at 5.42, while standing by the summer-house (opposite the Nun's Walk), I turned round and thought I saw some one in the corner of the field. But it is easy to imagine things when turning suddenly and when it is beginning to get dark.' The incident occurred seventeen minutes after Russell thought he heard Harry Marshall address him.

Other students who visited Borley include John Cooper, D. Ackland, J. Dashwood, M. Jacomb, and D. Jones. This party—from one of our famous public schools—visited the site on the evening of December 19, 1945. They camped in the summer-house. In a report which Mr Cooper sent me the following incident is recorded: in true professional manner, they 'ringed' a number of objects, as a control for possible paranormal movements. Included among these articles was half of a two-inch brick (the ancient variety, which must have come from the foundations of the Rectory or the cellar well). This was placed in the centre of the fixed table that stands in the middle of the summer-house. Suddenly the brick fell to the ground. No one touched it. The brick was seen to be lying on the ground, immediately below that portion of the edge of the table, from which it had fallen. Then suddenly it disappeared, a search revealing that it had travelled, on the ground, to the *other* side of the table. The thick wooden support of the table lay in the path between the two successive positions the brick had occupied: Therefore the brick must have made a curvilinear flight *round* the support. If the brick had travelled in a straight line it would

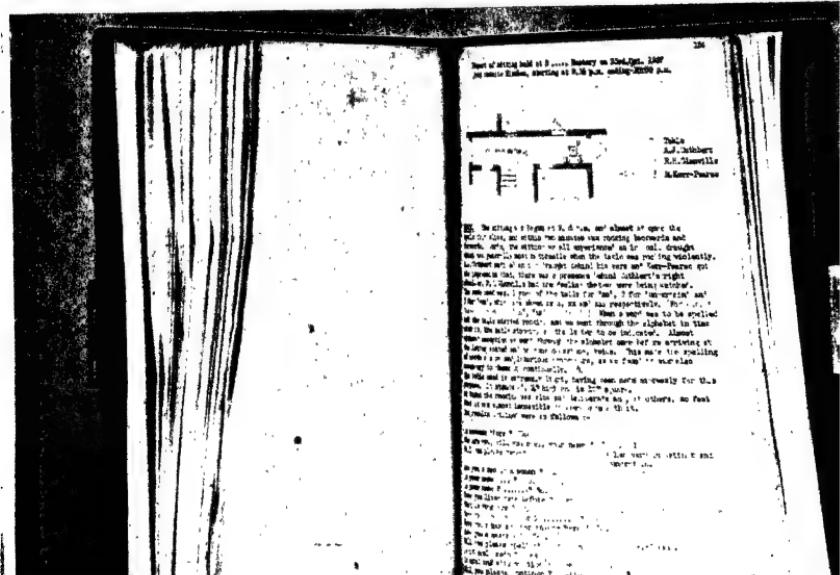


PLATE IV. THE LARGE SUMMER-HOUSE, FACING THE NUN'S WALK, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

Photographed January 5, 1944.

PLATE V. S. H. GLANVILLE'S 'LOCKED BOOK' OF PRIVATE INFORMATION

[See p. 117]





have hit the post. The successive positions of the brick were photographed, and Mr Cooper enclosed a copy with his report.

On January 19, 1946, Mr Peter Jackson, of 39 Beadon Road, Bromley, Kent, and his friend Mr L. H. P. Hall visited Borley, and they too spent the night in the summer-house, there being no other shelter. A glance at Plan I will show that the summer-house is very close to the 'hollow' road that runs past the Rectory. At 10.30 P.M. they both heard 'brisk, clear footsteps coming down the road in the direction of the summer-house. When they drew abreast they ceased abruptly. We at once left the summer-house and had a thorough search round with the aid of torches and the car headlights. There was no one there. An hour later there was a sudden "swishing" in the road, as of a bicycle free-wheeling downhill at high speed. But this noise did not *die* away: it stopped suddenly. It could not have been what it seemed to be, because the sound went *up* the slope, and it was *not* a motor-cycle or car.' The reader will recollect that invisible 'walkers' have been heard in the road outside the Rectory on many occasions; and the sound of horses' hoofs galloping along this lane was, at one time, a common aural phenomenon.

#### GHOST-HUNTING IN A THUNDERSTORM

On July 9, 1943, Mr Robert Fordyce Aickman wrote to me asking how permission could be obtained to visit Borley Rectory, with a few friends, who were, respectively, a Press Officer of the Dominions Office; the Chief Executive Secretary of *Vry Nederland*, the organ of the Netherlands Government; a young Czech scientist; and Mr Aickman's wife (E. R. Gregorson). Mr Aickman said that they were governed 'solely by scientific interest.'

In my reply I gave Mr Aickman all the information likely to help him, and their first visit was on Saturday, July 24, 1943, and they remained at the Rectory from 9.15 P.M. to 11 P.M. Present: Mr and Mrs Aickman and Miss Mary George, the Press Officer. Mr Aickman's report continues:

It was a perfect evening, and absolutely still, without any wind at all: and the only incident worth mentioning was that while we were standing on the first floor looking down the well of the main staircase, our position being outside the entrance to the Chapel, we heard a loud crash, coming apparently from inside one of the 'cupboards' [see Plan II] to the west of the drawing-room door. Some heavy object undoubtedly fell or was thrown, as we saw dust rising inside the passage. With the house in its present dilapidated condition, all that can be said to make this incident of interest is that at no other time when we were on the premises, not even on a later occasion when a considerable wind was blowing, did we hear any disturbance at all similar: least of all the same evening—which, as I say, was an exceptionally still one.

The second visit of Mr Aickman and his friends was on the following Saturday, July 31, and the party consisted of Miss George, Mr L. W. J. Jelinek, and Mr and Mrs Aickman. The report reads as follows:

This visit, in its way, was a sensational one. We arrived at 10 P.M., equipped to spend the night in the house. As we approached, thunder began to be audible; and, as darkness descended, a long storm of exceptional intensity for England began—I mention that the electrical supply of Long Melford was put out of action by the atmospheric disturbances. The storm continued for about an hour and a half, making auditory observations a matter of difficulty; but nothing appeared to happen, and the house appeared to survive the storm without further damage of any description. We settled for the night in No. 1 Room, not ideal, perhaps, for observational purposes, but enforced upon us by the conditions. Mr Jelinek and I spent about three-quarters of an hour, until darkness was complete,<sup>1</sup> in the drawing-room, observing the Nun's Walk. We saw nothing. We all remained awake, making observations of various kinds, until 1.30 A.M. From 1.30 A.M. until 3.30 A.M. Miss George and I kept watch, while the others slept. From 3.30 A.M. until 5.30 A.M. Mr Jelinek and my wife watched. At 6.50 A.M. we left the house.

The only incidents were: (1) at 12.30 A.M., when the storm had been over for some time, we all heard a sharp crack, as of a pebble thrown inside an adjoining room; (2) at 1.30 A.M., upon examining the house before arranging the above watches, Mr Jelinek and I discovered that one of the wooden rectangles which floor the

<sup>1</sup> Their visit was made during the period of British Double Summer Time.—H. P.

scullery had been lifted: the rectangle had certainly been in place upon our previous visit on the 24th, but as it had been placed behind the door of the room, we had doubtless overlooked it upon our previous examination during the storm.

The Aickman party again visited the Rectory later in the same day (*i.e.*, August 1), and no incident occurred except that Miss George was struck by a pebble.

Mr Aickman, in his letter-report, gave me the interesting information that the military authorities had 'completely demolished' the pseudo-Gothic summer-house<sup>1</sup> at the end of the garden. He says: 'For no obvious reason, they seem to have felt called upon to excavate a large earthwork not a few feet to the north or south of the summer-house, but on the site of the summer-house.' We shall see later in this chapter that the military did not remain long at the Rectory—and the reason. The cats' cemetery, to which I referred in Chapter I, was, Mr Aickman informed me, completely invisible owing to the dense growth of brambles. 'But it is illustrative of the isolation of the place that the fruit-trees remain laden with fruit.'

#### EVIDENCE FROM AMERICA

We must go to America for our next testimony, though the witness in question lives at Borley. In the *American Weekly* for October 11, 1942, was printed an article, 'Can't Bomb out Britain's Spooks,' which deals with how the 'ghosts' of this country survived the German air 'blitz.' Much of the article concerns Borley, and the London editor of the journal sent a representative to the Rectory in order to investigate. During his inquiries in the village he interviewed a Mrs Savage, one of the few inhabitants. The reporter writes:

Mrs Savage lives in a cottage near the haunted Rectory. She is portly, middle-aged, and a hard-headed, reasonable lady. 'I have got no time to mess with things like that,' she said sharply. 'I never did believe in ghosts until I came here. But there is certainly something strange about the Rectory. The only thing that surprises me is that they do no harm to people. They want to be left alone, poor

<sup>1</sup> This is shown in Plate II (facing p. 26) of *The Most Haunted House in England*.

lonely things. Each and every one of them seems to tell us humans to mind our own business.' Her calm, blue eyes surveyed our representative. 'Yes,' she nodded. 'I've heard sounds from that place. Queer sounds that couldn't be made by man or beast, nor wind nor decay. Seen lights too—often, in fact. Got me into trouble, they have,' she said, with natural indignation. 'The A.R.P. thought it was me breaking the black-out. Just imagine that!'

The writer mentions the tradition that the 'nun' is always seen on July 28 of each year and says, 'She kept her date in 1940 and 1941 and made her shadowy way about the Rectory grounds.' If, in fact, the nun was seen on the dates mentioned I have no first-hand evidence for these 'appearances.'

#### MR HENNING'S NEWS-LETTERS

Periodically the Rev. A. C. Henning, the Rector of Borley-cum-Liston, is good enough to keep me informed as to any new phenomenon recorded at Borley, or any news concerning the Rectory that is likely to interest me.

On April 16, 1942, Mr Henning, from Liston Rectory, wrote to the effect that objects had been displaced in Borley Church, after the building had been locked up for the night. He says:

I thought you might be interested to know of two matters connected with Borley Rectory. The first is the sanctuary lamp, which is kept burning near the Tabernacle on the altar, where the Sacrament is reserved. Mrs Pearson looks after this, lighting the small wick each morning and putting it out at night. For about a fortnight the wick was frequently moved. She told me this, and I suggested putting a book or cover of some kind over the lamp glass. She put a psalter over, after putting the light out, and then locked up for the night.

She was very surprised next morning to find the book on the floor, especially as both doors were locked and no one could possibly have got in during the night. She next put a book-cover over the lamp, and this was removed on two occasions. Since then nothing has happened. There may, of course, be some simple explanation, but we don't quite see how a bird or bat could remove the book and cover—at least, it seems unlikely to me. Mrs Pearson looked round for a bird, but we have not had one in the church for some time.

As a postscript to Mr Henning's letter, I will add that, during the past fifty years, several phenomena have been recorded as having occurred in, or in the vicinity of, Borley Church, which is just opposite the Rectory. For example, in my previous Borley monograph I have recorded how Miss Ethel Bull, one of the daughters of the Rev. Henry Bull, informed us that, many years ago, the heavy coffins in the crypt<sup>1</sup> of the church had been displaced. They were all higgledy-piggledy, and no normal explanation was forthcoming—an incident reminiscent of the famous case of the displaced coffins in a vault at Christ Church, Barbados, between the years of 1812 and 1820. I have fully described this case elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Even during my tenancy of the Rectory it was reported to me that 'music and choir-singing' had been heard in Borley Church at night, when it was certain that the church was locked and empty.

Mr Henning continues:

The other matter concerns the officer who slept in the Rectory about a year ago, I think. The chaplain informed Mrs Henning that this officer arrived there with his men one evening and was so tired that he decided to sleep there. The men would not go in as they did not like the look of the place. The officer was awakened several times in the night by all the bells ringing. He was too tired to take much notice, and went to sleep again. I understand that the officer did *not* know of the reputation of the place.

Very curiously, I had already been notified some four months earlier that the military authorities had attempted to use the Rectory, without success. I had filed the information in the Borley *dossier*, but had forgotten it. The information was sent to me by Surgeon-Lieutenant R. R. Prewer, R.N.V.R., of 'Domus,' Gore Court Road, Sittingbourne, Kent. In his letter, dated December 7, 1941, he says:

My nephew wrote to me some months ago, saying that a friend of his at Clare had told him how the Rectory had been partially restored,<sup>3</sup> and that the Army tried to make use of it earlier in the

<sup>1</sup> How we tried to find this crypt in August 1943 I will relate in Chapter XIV.

<sup>2</sup> *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 316-320.

<sup>3</sup> The military may have placed some temporary coverings over the rooms, but no permanent restoration was attempted.—H. P.

war; but they were so annoyed by *Poltergeister* that they had to seek quieter billets elsewhere.

Mr Henning's evidence is important confirmation of the story sent me by Surgeon-Lieutenant Prewer, whose interesting letter I will again mention in a later chapter.

In his next letter (October 26, 1942) Mr Henning mentioned that a mouse had been caught in the church, and suggests that this particular representative of the *Mus musculus* might have been responsible for removing the wick of the sanctuary lamp, and displacing the books, etc., which were used to protect it. Personally, I think this is hardly possible.

Mr Henning's letter of September 15, 1943, contains some interesting information. He says:

An officer's wife (Mrs Martin) who is staying with us, went to look at the Rectory on Sunday night on the way to the church, and became cold all over, as Miss Reid did. She had *not* read your book, and did not know of Miss Reid's experience until we told her later.

This sensation of sudden and extreme coldness at Borley has been experienced several times by persons visiting the Rectory—persons strangers to one another, and at frequent intervals. The Miss Reid mentioned by Mr Henning visited the Rectory in August 1937, and, quoting from the report,<sup>1</sup> 'She had a feeling of terror, a sensation of pins and needles all over, and felt very cold, although it was a warm evening. We felt her hands, which were indeed icy.' She recovered, 'but when we returned about fifteen minutes later the same thing happened again.' The portion of the Rectory where Miss Reid became so distressed was on the landing outside the Blue Room on the first floor, at a place known as the 'Cold Spot'—so named because it seemed to chill certain people. This spot was *exactly* over a subsidence in the cellar (see Plan IV). This subsidence was investigated, but, apart from establishing the fact that it was the oldest portion of the foundations (ancient two-inch bricks were discovered), digging revealed no human remains.

On September 20, 1937, Squadron-Leader Horniman visited

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 207-208.

the Rectory with a friend. Horniman reports: 'What is interesting is that, without any previous information, this friend came over desperately cold on the landing where Kerr-Pearse's friend did. . . . His hands were much below normal temperature.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr Kerr-Pearse's cousin, Mr Rupert Haig, visited the Rectory on September 21, 1937, and in a letter (October 2, 1937) remarks: 'Suddenly, the air surrounding me became ice-cold; my hands became icy, and in fact I became cold all over and my hair stood on end. I was rigid. The sensation lasted, as nearly as I can judge, about twenty seconds.'<sup>2</sup> The temperature of the air surrounding Mr Haig, as measured at the time, was 60° Fahrenheit.

It is therefore obvious that Mrs Martin's experience was not unique. What is interesting is the fact that these 'sensations of coldness' (whether physical or merely physiological), persisted to the autumn of 1943. Many other observers also noted similar thermal phenomena.

My last letter (dated May 4, 1944) from Mr Henning, likely to interest the reader, concerns the nun. It will be remembered that in Chapter I, I gave a short *résumé* of how Fred Cartwright saw the nun standing by the gate of the Rectory, on four occasions, in the autumn of 1927. Mr Henning informed me that Mr Hardy, a foreman painter who has lived at Borley all his life, told him of a man working on a near-by aerodrome, who had also seen the nun. He had to pass the Rectory each day on his way to work (just as Cartwright did), and early one morning he saw her. He afterwards told Hardy: 'I saw a nun outside that house the other day, and she did look miserable.' This was about May 1942—fifteen years after Cartwright's experience. Mr Henning was unable to interview the man himself, as apparently he was then working on an airfield in a different part of the county. Whether the figure seen was indeed the veritable Borley nun, or a flesh-and-blood Sister of Mercy on some business or other, cannot now be determined. If the latter,

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 200–201. See the experiments of the Cambridge Commission, Chapter IX. It was proved that the 'Cold Spot' was, in fact, sometimes colder than the surrounding atmosphere.—H. P.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

then the fact that she was waiting at the same spot outside the Rectory, at the same early hour of the morning, and had the same woebegone expression, would be a remarkable coincidence —to say the least of it.

When I was at Borley in May 1945 I interviewed (on May 30) Mrs W. Newman, of Rectory Cottages, Liston. Mr Henning had informed me that she had been employed at the Rectory and had had some strange experiences there. I found Mrs Newman very intelligent and willing to relate her psychic adventures. As a girl, she had been employed by the Bull family as a cook. She was in their service for three and a half years, from the beginning of 1924 to the death of the Rev. Harry Bull in 1927. Her sleeping quarters was a large room over the kitchen (marked No. 3 on Plan III), with a window that looked out on the courtyard. Her bedroom contained two doors: one leading to the bathroom passage, the other giving access to our No. 2 room (see Plan III), which she called the 'pear room' (where pears and fruit were stored), a term which was new to me. She carefully locked *both* of these doors every night before retiring to rest.

Because her bedroom was so large, a curtain, made of some thin, light material, was suspended across the apartment, dividing the room into two parts. Mrs Newman slept in that portion which did not contain the window. Contiguous to the curtain, on the window side of the room, were some wall-pegs, on which she hung her clothes. On several occasions, just as it was getting light, she was awakened by something—she never knew what. But as she lay in bed she could see her clothes—or their shadows—being disturbed on the other side of the curtain. As the light from the window illuminated her garments, they were plainly silhouetted against the semi-transparent curtain. The impression she gained was that 'something' was examining her belongings, which moved backward and forward between the curtain and the window. She never discovered *what* was moving them, or heard any sounds. There was no draught in the room.

More alarming was the almost nightly unlocking of the door leading to the 'pear room.' As I have stated, both doors of her

room were locked each night, the keys being left in their locks, *inside* the room. But morning after morning she would find that during the night the door leading to the 'pear room' had been unlocked, and the door left wide open. This occurred frequently. Finally, she removed the key after locking the 'pear room' door, which was not afterwards interfered with. The key and door leading to the bathroom passage were never disturbed. The only other access to her room was via the window overlooking the courtyard, many feet below. But this window was never touched, and was, in fact, often fastened when the 'pear room' was opened.

Whatever opened Mrs Newman's bedroom door must have been *inside* the room while she was undressing—a fact that recalls Mr M. Kerr-Pearse's similar experience when he was having his supper in the Base Room on October 26, 1937.<sup>1</sup> Borley Rectory has been notorious for the spontaneous locking and unlocking of doors, recorded by many observers. The 'entities' inhabiting the house were obsessed with a passion for interfering with doors, locks, and keys. But the Rev. A. L. Foyster, with his relic of the Curé d'Ars, was, apparently, a match for them.

The last witness I will cite in this chapter is Mrs A. C. Henning (who, by the way, is a B.A. of London University), wife of the present Rector of Borley-cum-Liston, who gave a talk on the Rectory hauntings to the Cambridge Women's Luncheon Club at the Dorothy Café, Cambridge, on April 18, 1945. A long account of the lecture was given in the *Cambridge Daily News* (April 19, 1945), from which I take the following extracts:

The speaker explained that her husband took the living in 1936, but said they found the Rectory, rebuilt in 1863, so unattractive and inconvenient for living in, that they at once decided to sell it, and went elsewhere in Borley to live. Because of its reputation it took two years to find a buyer, and they then sold it for £500, whereas it had been insured for £3500. Soon after it was destroyed by fire, and all that now remained were a few bricks.

Mrs Henning spoke first of the visitations of the nun who, local tradition had it, had been seen for over a hundred years. Numerous people, including a former Rector, his wife, their children, and their

<sup>1</sup> See *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 210.

maids, had seen her, and she had been seen even since the place was burnt down. All remarked on her sad appearance, the speaker said, and how real she looked. 'The curious thing is that she was always outside the house, although swishings were heard inside, like those of a nun's garments. I have heard these myself,' she added, 'and it made my flesh creep.'

Speaking of Poltergeists, Mrs Henning went on to tell some most amusing stories. . . . One of these incidents to raise a laugh was when the speaker mentioned a tin trunk that suddenly appeared in the kitchen during a meal, and disappeared just as suddenly some time later. The ringing of bells had, she said, been heard during the present war, by soldiers who slept there whilst on manœuvres.

By a curious coincidence, a cousin of a former Rector (the Rev. L. A. Foyster, who used to keep a diary of the happenings) was present, and was able to affirm that all the things Mrs Henning spoke of had actually taken place.

Mrs Henning's hearers sat enthralled as the speaker told them, in an intensely matter-of-fact way which lent both colour and conviction to her narrative, about the famous Rectory's reputed ghosts.

So much for my latest 'cloud of witnesses'—or, rather, a few of them. In the following pages I will introduce the reader to many more, including the man who thought he would like to open a tea-garden. His adventures form the subject of my next chapter.

## THE ENCHANTED 'TEA-GARDEN'

I MENTIONED in Chapter IV that after my article on Borley Rectory appeared in *Everybody's Weekly* (August 7, 1943) the editor and I received a number of letters from readers. Undoubtedly the two most important of these—and certainly the most interesting—were sent to the editor, who at once forwarded them to me.

One of the letters was accompanied by a long statement or report, and was sent by Mr Gilbert Hayes, the well-known film comedian, who has not only appeared in some 350 films, but has travelled all over the world (including 75,000 miles in two years); has enjoyed the delights of seal-hunting in a ninety-ton schooner; and has had strange adventures in many lands. I mention these details in order to show that Mr Hayes is decidedly a man of the world and not likely to 'imagine' things. But, in spite of his exciting career, he emphasizes in his letter (dated August 8, 1943, and addressed from Rose Cottage, Bastanford Powick, Worcester) that 'the events at Borley were the strangest in my life.'

The advent of the war naturally put a stop to many of Mr Hayes's activities; so, in September 1939, his thoughts turned to the sylvan beauties of the countryside; to some quiet village retreat, where he could rest and be at peace after his adventurous life—and to tea-gardens.

Although Mr Hayes has never told me this, I imagine that he and his wife thought they would retire to the country for the period of the war, and that running a tea-garden would be a congenial and not too strenuous occupation, and one which at the same time would enable them to enjoy a rural life with its many advantages. I can speak authoritatively about these matters, because I too have lived in a village for more than thirty years.

So Mr Hayes purchased a copy of *Dalton's Weekly*, that useful journal wherein are to be found advertisements inserted by people who want to buy or sell, or let or rent, properties ranging from towers to tea-gardens.

Mr Hayes found what he wanted—or thought he wanted. The location of the 'house and garden' was not given, which, perhaps, was just as well. Borley is 'miles from anywhere,' right off the main road, nearly three miles from the nearest railway station, and a long way from a bus route. If I opened a tea-garden at Borley I should think I was doing well if I had ten customers a week. I repeat that the name of Borley was not mentioned in the advertisement. Had it been Mr Hayes might have made inquiries. Had he done so it would have saved a day of his time, considerable expense, an infuriating journey from London and back, and much disappointment. But he would have missed his adventure!

I will now emphasize some very important facts: (a) Mr Hayes had never heard of Borley, and my book on the Rectory had not then been published; (b) he did not know me; (c) he did not know that particular part of Essex and Suffolk; (d) he took no interest in psychical research and knew nothing about it; (e) he had never heard of any 'most haunted house in England.' I emphasize these facts because any question of 'suggestion' (or, to put it more technically, 'expectant attention' or 'dominant idea') or hallucinosis is absolutely ruled out.

So Mr Hayes wrote to the box number mentioned in the advertisement, and in due course received a reply. Even then, if either Mr or Mrs Hayes had ever heard of Borley Rectory, the agents' order to view 'Borley Priory' would not have led them to connect the two places. I believe that when Captain Gregson purchased the Rectory from Queen Anne's Bounty one of the conditions of the sale was that the house should be renamed 'Borley Priory,' in order to avoid possible confusion.

I will now let Mr Hayes (whom I have never met) speak for himself, and I herewith reproduce, *verbatim et literatim*, the account that he sent to the editor:

## THE GHOST OF BORLEY PRIORY

It was in September 1939 that we read an advertisement in *Dalton's Weekly*, that a house, suitable for conversion into tea-gardens, was to let near Sudbury, Suffolk. We answered the advertisement and considered ourselves fortunate when we received a reply, granting permission to view. The key was at a cottage close to the house, which was stated in the letter to be 'Borley Priory.' We arrived at Sudbury, and hired a taxi to take us out to the property, which was some three miles away. It was a bright September morning.

We arrived at the Priory, and walked up the drive and through the gates into the yard. I asked my wife to go for the keys at the cottage, and the taximan said he would turn the car round and wait outside. I walked across the yard, under the glass veranda of the coach-house, and through to the stables. I stood underneath a large tree for some minutes, then walked across the yard to a door in the wall. *I heard a door close*, and footsteps coming along the drive. I thought to myself, 'My wife is returning.' I pushed the door in the wall; it opened, and as I passed through I *heard*, without fear of contradiction, footsteps behind me. In fact, the feeling was so real that, thinking it was my wife, I said, 'You are soon back.' I did not turn round. Through the door I found myself in a lean-to greenhouse. I still clearly heard the sound of feet on the path. The door closed; I did not turn my head, but *felt* that some one was standing behind me, and as I gazed round the lean-to I was of the opinion that my wife was still there. I spoke to her without turning my head, and explained what I considered could be done with the shelves and glasshouse, outlining my views of what could be grown. I went on talking, and walked down the side of the house, and as I distinctly still heard footsteps following me, I took it for granted my wife was behind me.

I continued on, stepping over bricks and debris which littered the path, talking and pointing out various things of interest, estimating the worth of the bricks and woodwork as I walked, and still the footsteps were behind me. Without turning my head, I cautioned my wife to be careful, and then walked round the front of the house and came to the well, where I stopped walking. The footsteps were still with me. I peered around the corner, where the dust-hole is, and then at the well. I thought my wife was still behind me, and I had the *impression* that she was still there. There was certainly some one behind me. I knelt down and looked at the well, and said: 'We could fix an electric pump here and pump the water into storage tanks,' and I continued to talk of the proposed venture to the person, whom I assumed to be my wife, behind me.

Then I distinctly heard the footsteps walk away down the side of the house. I looked round to see where my wife was going; *no one was in sight!* A moment later my wife came to the doorway, and was a little irritable. I asked her why she did not reply when I spoke to her. She replied that she hadn't heard me. She had the key in her hand, so I said, 'Let's get on with it, and we'll see the rooms over the coach-house.'<sup>1</sup> The stairs are narrow and winding, and a little awkward for one of my bulk—some twenty stones. I suggested to my wife that she should go up and see the rooms and, if she thought they were suitable, I would then follow her and go up.

While my wife was in the large room—a combined kitchen and living-room—she spoke to me because she thought she heard me on the landing outside. She thought I had followed her up and was looking at the other rooms. When she came down I was standing under the tree. She asked me what I thought of the rooms, and would hardly believe me when I said that I hadn't been upstairs. She asked me to go up and look at them, and to please her I went.

I went up the steps, followed, as I thought, by my wife, as I heard the footsteps behind me. I saw a room in which were a table and a chair or two, mats on the floor, and on the wall, in a kind of paper hold-all, were some bills. They were receipts for very small amounts of groceries; in fact, a few pennyworths of cheese, etc. I laughed at these, and as I still heard footsteps across the landing, I made a joke about the grocery items. The bills I returned to the hold-all, folding them over and stuffing them in. I still heard the footsteps in front of me, and thought, 'Well, she's had enough—she's gone down the steps.' As I left the room I stood in the doorway, and gazed around, looking at the shelves: *the bills which I had a few seconds before placed securely in the hold-all had been laid on the shelf!* Notwithstanding the fact that I had folded those bills up, and carefully stuffed them into the hold-all, I wondered if I had made a mistake, but the point wasn't worth considering, so I promptly forgot it. When I got down into the yard my wife asked my opinion about the rooms. I laughed and said they were suitable, and then joked about the receipts again. She said, looking at me rather queerly, 'Well, there's the tree you have always wanted,' and without a doubt it was the best walnut-tree I had ever seen. That settled the question of taking the property, and we decided to write to Captain Gregson and complete the deal. We returned the key, got into the taxi, and reached Sudbury station, where we had an hour or so to wait. We sat on a form and talked the matter over.

A postman came and sat down beside us, and he, I noticed, was

<sup>1</sup> The so-called 'cottage.'—H. P.

listening to our conversation—which by this time was a little sharp. My wife had told me she had *not* seen the lean-to greenhouse; she had *not* walked round the house with me; I had *not* said to her that the brickwork and wood were valuable; and she had *not* gone through the door, and she only joined me at the well. When I asked her why she didn't reply she said I had *not* shown her the bills upstairs, because she wasn't there. When I said that *I* wasn't upstairs with *her* she thought I was trying to be funny at her expense. Anyway, as the postman was obviously interested and amused, we changed the conversation by asking him if there was a short cut from the station to Borley Priory across the fields. Imagine our surprise when he said, 'Borley Priory? Are you people going to rent it?' I answered, 'Yes. That is why we are asking you about a short cut.' He said, 'I wish you joy of it! Don't you know that that is the most haunted house in all England?' Then he told my wife and me about the psychical research people who had been to see the place. So now, almost four years later, I still ask myself these questions:

1. Who came through the greenhouse with me?
2. Who was it that followed me round the house and left me at the well?
3. Who was in the room and on the landing when I thought my wife had spoken to me?
4. Who was in the room with me when I joked about the grocery bill? I folded those bills and placed them in the hold-all and walked fifteen paces. During that period those bills were back on the shelf, having been moved two feet.

I have related this adventure many times to various people ever since it happened. I don't know Harry Price; he doesn't know me; but our experiences, as related here, are *facts*.

August 8, 1943

(Signed) GILBERT HAYES

I need hardly inform the reader that Mr Hayes did *not* rent 'Borley Priory' with its enchanted 'tea-garden.' His adventures in the cottage were a flashback to the days when Mr and Mrs Edward Cooper, who occupied the same rooms from 1916 to 1919, heard the nocturnal 'dog' padding around every night, and thought, on one occasion, that every bit of china in the place had been smashed.

The Rev. Daniel L. Booth, Vicar of St Michael's, Sutton Ings, Hull, had a rather similar experience to that of Mr Hayes's,

as recently as September 1945. He and his young son were spending a holiday near Cambridge, and thought they would cycle over to Borley in order to examine the site of the Rectory, the summer-house, the Nun's Walk, etc. They wandered about the place, and Mr Booth found himself in the thicket at the bottom of the garden. He heard his son following close behind him and stop walking when he did. Without turning his head, Mr Booth began speaking to his boy about the overgrown state of the grounds. He says (September 22, 1945), 'As I received no reply, I suddenly turned round and found I had been talking to myself, my boy being elsewhere at the time, though I assumed he was behind me in the undergrowth.'

What Mr and Mrs Hayes and Mr Booth heard was one of the commonest phenomena associated with Borley Rectory, but I have no other record of footsteps having been heard in the garden. Many people, many times, have heard footsteps in the house and on the 'hollow' road outside the Rectory. For example, on March 29, 1939, I interviewed Mr Gerald Bull (one of the children of the Rev. Henry Bull), who was born at the Rectory, and he told me that when walking up the lane and approaching the Rectory he, at least fifty times, heard footsteps following him. He always turned round, but never saw anyone, and could not account for them.<sup>1</sup>

Striking confirmation of Mr Gerald Bull's testimony, and further evidence for 'footsteps,' come to me from Mr Arthur S. Medcraft, an electrical engineer, of 102 Ashgrove Road, Goodmayes, Essex. Writing on August 27, 1943, Mr Medcraft (whom I have never met) says:

DEAR SIR,

Having been interested in Borley Rectory, from a psychic point of view, for more than a year now, I was wondering if my two small experiences would be of interest. I have been to Borley many times, and on one occasion only did I experience two peculiar happenings.

On arriving at Sudbury one morning about the beginning of last July, there was no alternative but to walk to Borley, and on this occasion, it being a warm day with brilliant sunshine, it made the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 51

walk pleasant. At about 12.15 P.M., on getting within two hundred yards of the Rectory, I became aware of footsteps following me and, on turning, saw nothing but the empty road, the footsteps ceasing at once. Thinking that the noise may have been caused by my case (containing tea-flask, sandwiches, etc.) knocking against my leg as I walked, I gripped the case tight in front of me and continued walking. I heard footsteps again. This time they were *slower* than mine and I turned my head suddenly, still walking. The footsteps ceased as before, there being nothing there but the empty road. I must add that I was not thinking of such a thing, as my mind, up to then, had been on the Rectory itself. By this time I was only a matter of a few yards from it, and was soon on the familiar drive. Everything was still. So I decided to adjourn to the lawn by the summer-house and eat my sandwiches, keeping the Rectory in view. As I have said, everything was still. But about an hour later I heard a tremendous bang of a door. I got up at once and investigated. The place was as still as before. There was not the slightest breeze. It occurred to me that if a door could have slammed normally it would hardly have waited for me to be there. The reason I say 'could' is because I do not think any of the doors *are* capable of slamming in such a definite way as to have enabled me to hear the click of the lock at such a distance, as I did. These two incidents, though not very much, are strange to explain. The Rectory has never given me a feeling of depression—only restfulness and stillness. A detail I noticed was that when walking by the French windows there was a strong aroma of something—quite pleasant—which I could not account for. I do not think it was due to any growth, although there is no other normal explanation. This was the only occasion on which I noticed it. I am *not* psychic, and until this visit I have experienced nothing out of the ordinary at the Rectory. I have since been there on July 28 and August 22, 1943, and both visits were negative.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) A. S. MEDCRAFT

I have little to add to Mr Medcraft's report except to note that Dr Nawrocki and his friends were at the Rectory on the night of July 28, 1943, and were more fortunate than my correspondent. As for the 'door-slammimg,' I was at the Rectory myself on August 17, 18, and 30, 1943, when excavating for the 'nun,'<sup>1</sup> and on those occasions the doors would not close. Some were off their hinges, and would neither open nor close. The

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIV.

noise heard by Mr Medcraft suggests that the sound was that of a door swinging easily on its hinges, and even the 'click of the lock,' as the door fastened, was heard.

The 'aroma' that was so apparent to Mr Medcraft may—or may not—have been a paranormal one. But many witnesses have testified to 'odours' being experienced at the Rectory: lavender, incense, etc. These were pleasant ones—others were decidedly the reverse.<sup>1</sup>

For particulars see *The Most Haunted House in England*.

## A CENTURY OF EVIDENCE

**I**N the issue of the *Spectator* dated October 18, 1940, was published a review by Dr C. E. M. Joad of *The Most Haunted House in England*. Three weeks later (November 8), in the correspondence columns of the same journal, appeared a letter from a gentleman referring to the review.

In his letter the correspondent states that 'some seven years ago'—i.e., in 1933—he and his family lived at Borley Rectory for a month.

The morning after his arrival, the writer tells us, he 'accidentally discovered' a typewritten manuscript which recorded 'very fully' the psychic history of the Rectory. He apparently read this manuscript, which was probably a copy of Mr Foyster's *Fifteen Months in a Haunted House*, to which I referred in Chapter II. From his perusal of the manuscript, the writer says that

it was very evident that the 'legend of the nun' had existed ever since the house had been built, and that her occasional supposed appearances kindled little more than mild family and local pride. The stories of 'concrete' manifestations such as your reviewer recounts were, I found, *then less than five years old*<sup>1</sup>. . . . During the whole of the time we lived in the house neither I nor my family saw or heard anything out of the ordinary.

As for the writer neither seeing nor hearing anything during his month's stay, I would remind him of the Spaniard who chose November for spending a month in London, and then went back to Seville and told his friends that the 'sun never shone in England' because all he saw were dense fogs of the pea-soup variety. I too have visited Borley many times without either seeing or hearing anything.

I should not have mentioned this gentleman at all, had it not been for his statement quoted above that 'the stories of "concrete"'

<sup>1</sup> My italics.—H. P.

manifestations were, I found, then less than five years old'—i.e., since 1928. This statement is incorrect.

When the correspondent wrote his letter to the *Spectator* in 1940 my book was, of course, available, and had he read it he would have seen the *first-hand* evidence for the following 'concrete' manifestations, all of them of a greater antiquity than five years:

1886. Mrs E. Byford (a nurse) left the Rectory on account of persistent 'ghostly footsteps.'

1900. Four of the Misses Bull saw, collectively, the figure of the 'nun' on their own lawn, in sunlight (July 28).

1900. Miss E. Bull and a cook saw the nun in the garden (November).

1916-19. Between these years Mr and Mrs Edward Cooper, who lived in the rooms<sup>1</sup> over the stables, saw the nun many times; were disturbed almost nightly by a 'padding dog' running round their room; saw a coach and horses sweep through the hedge, across the road, into the farmyard, and then vanish; and saw a 'black shape' in their bedroom.

1927. Fred Cartwright four times saw the nun standing at the gate of Borley Rectory.

I have cited only a few of the 'concrete' manifestations, 'more than five years old,' accounts of which were available to the correspondent when he rushed into print and sent his letter to the *Spectator*.

Since my book was published I have received much more evidence for the early haunting of Borley Rectory, and this latest testimony I now propose to submit to the reader.

When I was at Borley in August 1943 the Rev. A. C. Henning gave me some information which is as important as it is interesting. Mrs C. Fahie, sister of Mr A. V. C. Lambert, the patron of Liston benefice, informed Mr Henning that when she was a young girl living in the parish an old man they knew well told her that when he was a boy of fifteen or sixteen he well remem-

<sup>1</sup> Where Mr Gilbert Hayes had his adventure.

bered hearing the story of a nun being seen at Borley. *This takes the story of the nun back about a century.* The present Rectory was not then built, but the evidence we possess shows that there was a Rectory, belonging to the Herringham family, on the same site.

Mr Henning also had an interview with another parishioner, Mr Farrance junior, who said that the Rev. Harry Bull (Rector of Borley from 1892 to 1927) had given him an account of how the 'nun' followed the Rector from the church, and down the path to the Rectory front door. Mr Bull hesitated whether he should leave the door open for her admittance, or close it. He finally decided to go straight into the house and shut the door—which he did. We do not know the exact date of this incident, but it was probably about 1900.

Confirmation that Harry Bull saw the nun comes to me from the Rev. Walter G. Stote, M.A. (Oxon), late Vicar of All Saints, Sudbury, Suffolk. Writing from 'Jenvey,' 40 Farwell Road, Sidcup, Kent, he says (March 22, 1941):

I have just finished reading your beautifully produced book entitled *The Most Haunted House in England*. It has proved most interesting, especially as we have known most of the Bull family resident in or near Sudbury, Suffolk, since 1919, when I became Vicar of All Saints, Sudbury. The Rev. Harry Bull told me himself about seeing the nun. Others have told my wife about the coach, etc. I remember at the time that I thought the underground passages might well repay attention. . . . Mr Bull, the Rector of Borley, I knew very well—not so the succeeding Rectors.

(Signed) WALTER G. STOTE

Still more evidence of what Harry Bull saw was very kindly sent to me by Mrs C. H. B. Gowan, whose late husband, Captain Gowan, I knew well. Mrs Gowan's mother, Mrs Savile, received a letter from the Rev. Harry Carpenter, 122 Woodstock Road, Oxford, and Mrs Gowan was good enough to send me a copy of that portion of Mr Carpenter's letter (dated October 30, 1941) relevant to the Borley case. Mr Carpenter says:

E. has handed on to us the part of your letter about the ghosts at Borley. As you say, the village is close to Foxearth, and we have read with much interest the book<sup>1</sup> about the apparitions, especially

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*.—H. P.

as we knew the Bull family well and some of the people who are mentioned by Mr Price as having seen the ghosts.

When, during the last war, I was a special constable, with Harry Bull as my superior officer, sometimes I went to spend a part of my patrol with him. One night he described what he had seen years before. Walking home from Sudbury one night, he became aware of galloping horses; then he saw lights coming towards him and he stepped off the road to let the carriage pass. He saw distinctly one man or two on the box, driving; they had no heads, only hands and the lower part of the body. As he watched the whole thing vanished. Again, one day in daylight, he was in the dining-room, out of which there was a conservatory. A dog with him was agitated, and he saw in the conservatory a man dressed in the same coloured clothes as the coachman he had seen before. He got up and went into the conservatory; the man went out and vanished.

The letter from Mr Carpenter reached me about twelve months *after* my book was published. His testimony is a confirmation of what Mr Harry Bull's sister, Miss Ethel Bull, told me, and the identical incident is recorded in my monograph.<sup>1</sup> The 'agitation' of the dog is reminiscent of how Captain Gregson's two spaniel puppies successively bolted upon seeing something (invisible to the Captain) in the courtyard of the Rectory.<sup>2</sup>

Other witnesses who have seen the coach and horses include Miss Mary Pearson, the Smiths' maid, who saw them twice. On the first occasion they 'went through the trees,' and disappeared. It was 'like a big cab.' On the second occasion she saw them from the road and 'chased it into the garden, where it disappeared.' It was a similar coach. On neither occasion did she see any driver.<sup>3</sup>

As the reader knows, Mr Edward Cooper also saw the coach, 'with glittering harness,' silently crashing through hedges and trees. As he stood and watched it from his cottage window it disappeared a few yards from him. Unlike Mary Pearson (who saw none), Mr Cooper saw two drivers, as Harry Bull did.<sup>4</sup>

As for the *noise* of the horses' hoofs, Mr Herbert Mayes, the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Rev. A. C. Henning's chauffeur, testified to a remarkable incident which he experienced on March 16, 1939 (twenty years after Mr Harry Bull's adventure), and which is very fully recorded in my previous Borley book.<sup>1</sup> Briefly, as he was cycling past the ruins of the Rectory he heard a terrific clatter of horses' hoofs approaching from the direction of Sudbury. As the horses drew nearer to him he jumped off his bicycle and, with it, stood right back against the hedge in order to allow them to pass. The sounds passed him, and disappeared in the distance. But there were *no* horses or any living thing!

Before me, as I write, is a letter from Mr Charles A. Boyden, Sousana P.O., Alberta, Canada. It is dated October 31, 1929, and was sent to the Rev. G. Eric Smith, when he was Rector of Borley. His widow, Mrs Smith, kindly contributed it to the *Borley dossier*. The Rectory Poltergeists—or an account of them—had seeped into the American Press, and had given Mr Boyden a touch of nostalgia, which prompted him to write to the Rector of his birthplace. He says:

Excuse the liberty I take in writing to you, but when I saw the pictures of the church and Rectory of my childhood days, and reading an account of the ghost story in an American paper, I remember the story being told to me over fifty years ago and I experienced a little of it myself. I was brought up in the village of Borley and went to Borley Church and Bible class, under the late Mr [Henry] Bull. My mother lived in one of the three houses down the lane from Borley Green. . . . I was nine years old when I left Borley, and have never heard of the dear old village until I saw it in the American paper. . . . I would be very pleased to receive a letter from you with news of the dear old village.

(Signed) CHAS. A. BOYDEN

Mr Boyden says that he was not only told of the ghost story 'over fifty years ago' (say, in 1878 or 1879), but 'experienced a little of it myself.' A boy nine years old is just of the age when any strange experience, such as a paranormal phenomenon, would make a deep and permanent impression on his mind and memory. So we can accept his statement (which merely confirms the Misses Bull's testimony) that 'manifestations' occurred

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

in 1878 or 1879, fifteen years after the Rectory was built. Unfortunately, Mr Boyden's letter has only recently come into my hands. I intend to write to him, and, if still living, perhaps he will be able to furnish us with more details of his psychic experiences.

At page 94 I mentioned a Mrs E. Byford. This lady was, in 1886, a nursemaid at Borley Rectory. Writing from Parsonage Farm, Newport, Essex, she says (June 11, 1929):

Much of my youth was spent in Borley and district with my grandparents, and it was common talk that the Rectory was haunted. Many people declared that they had seen figures walking at the bottom of the garden. I once worked at the Rectory forty-three years ago [*i.e.*, in 1886], as under-nursemaid, but I only stayed there a month, because the place was so weird. . . . When I had been there a fortnight something awakened me in the dead of night. Some one was walking down the passage towards the door of my room, and the sound made suggested that they were wearing slippers. As the head nurse always called me at six o'clock, I thought it must be she, but nobody entered the room, and I suddenly thought of the 'ghost.' The next morning I asked the other four maids if they had come to my room, and they all said they had not. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The above, and other incidents, so unnerved Mrs Byford that her grandparents removed her from the Rectory and would not even let her pass the house after dark.

Mrs Byford's testimony not only tallies with Mr Boyden's evidence, but also confirms the strange stories which the Misses Bull related to me as to what happened to them when they were young. But if further evidence were needed to prove the occurrence of paranormal happenings at the Rectory during this period, it has been supplied—out of the blue—by a long letter and statement that I received some three years ago.

When my *Most Haunted House in England* was published at the end of 1940 copies of it were, of course, sent to many parts of the world, and reviews of it appeared in journals published in South Africa and other parts of the British Empire. On March 5,

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of Mrs Byford's letter see *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 47-48.

1942, I received a letter from Mr P. Shaw Jeffrey, M.A. (Oxon), who was formerly headmaster of Colchester Royal Grammar School. It was written from Lenox Hotel, Gardens, Cape Town. With it, he sent me a cutting from the *Cape Times*.<sup>1</sup> It was a note on a review of my book that the editor had asked him to write. I was not acquainted with Mr Jeffrey, and we have never met. Here is his letter:

SIXTY YEARS AGO: AN UNDERGRADUATE'S ADVENTURES

DEAR MR PRICE,

I have just been reading your book about Borley Rectory. I am very interested because Harry Bull and I were born in the same year [1862]; we went to Oxford together, I at Queen's, he at Exeter College, and in the long vacations I used to go and stay with him at Borley. He was an extraordinary man; he was always asleep. Nine times out of ten he never turned up to meals at the Rectory. Some one had to go and find him. He was always asleep in one or other of the arbours.<sup>2</sup>

I was there in 1885 and 1886. You say there were fourteen in family,<sup>3</sup> but when I was there I am pretty sure there were seventeen. There were so many that they went about in cliques, and the different cliques were only dimly aware of each other. My clique consisted of Harry, Ally (who was at Cambridge), Dodie, the eldest girl, and Freda. The old man [*i.e.*, the Rev. Henry Bull] was a great sportsman. He used to tell how, after he was ordained, he drove away from the Bishop's Palace in a tandem with a smart 'tiger' up behind. He called himself a 'hedge parson' and never wore canonicals except for Sunday morning service. He used to get into his ordinary clothes before midday dinner (Sundays), and if there was any time to spare he used to lie on the drawing-room floor and pot at rabbits at the bottom of the garden with a rook rifle.

I had lots of small adventures at the Rectory. Stones falling about, my boots found on top of the wardrobe, etc., etc., and I saw the nun several times and often heard the coach go clattering by. But the big adventure that would have been worth your while recording was one time when I missed a big French dictionary which I had been regularly using for some days. Nobody could find it, but one night I was awakened by a big bump on the floor, and there was the dictionary (after I had lit my candle), with its

<sup>1</sup> January 1941.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, summer-houses.—H. P.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Bull's sister, Miss Ethel Bull, tells me that there were only fourteen children.—H. P.

back a good deal knocked about, sprawling on the floor. My bedroom door was *locked*.

Another much more startling adventure was in 1886 (August), and this happened at Felix Bull's [a brother of the Rev. Henry Bull] neighbouring rectory. I can't remember the name,<sup>1</sup> but it had a watch-tower in the garden built by some former incumbent who had a crazy idea that if he built it tall enough he could see the sea. Felix Bull was having trouble with a Poltergeist, and he came over to lunch and told us about it. Next day Harry and I borrowed the family coach and drove over to Felix's. He was out, but the cook said, 'Well, Master Harry, if there's any foolishness going on, it's all along of our new housemaid, that's what *I* say!' 'Where is she?' asked Harry Bull. 'Up in the best bedroom, making the beds.' 'Right you are, we'll go up.' So we went. The room was large and long, with three windows along one side. We stood by the door. The maid was at the far end of the room, making the beds. Close to us was the fireplace. Harry Bull said, 'Well, Mary, cook says you can show us a few tricks. What about it?'

The maid said nothing, but a tooth-glass came flying across from the washing-stand, behind the maid's back, and circled gracefully round, hitting the jamb of the door just above my head. Just afterwards the fender and fire-irons moved right out across the room with a clatter. The maid never spoke a word. Nor did we. We bolted!

Later on this maid went to London and became a medium.

I saw very little of Harry Bull after I came down from Oxford, as I was living abroad. But in about 1920 he came over to Colchester (I was then headmaster of Colchester Royal Grammar School) to ask me if I could recommend him a *locum* as he wanted to take a holiday. But by that time parsons were beginning to fight shy of Borley Rectory, and I failed.

This is badly written, but as far as I know it is strictly true.

With many thanks,

Yours, etc.,

(Signed) P. SHAW JEFFREY

In the article, 'Mysteries of Borley Rectory,' that Mr Jeffrey wrote for the *Cape Times*,<sup>2</sup> the information he gave me in his

<sup>1</sup> Pentlow, five miles north-west of Sudbury. In 1859 an octagonal brick tower (99 feet high) in the Tudor style was erected in the Rectory grounds by the Rev. Edward Bull, the Rev. Henry Bull's brother, to the memory of their father. A magnificent panorama, which includes more than forty-five churches, can be seen from the top of the tower. As with Borley, the living of Pentlow is in the gift of the Misses Bull.—H. P.

<sup>2</sup> January 1941.

letter is amplified somewhat. Speaking of the Rev. Harry Bull, he says:

His father was a typical 'squarson.'<sup>1</sup> He was very well-to-do. The family had a good deal of property round the Sudbury district, and had one or two more livings in their gift besides the family living of Borley. The Bull family consisted of seventeen children, all at home at the same time during the vacations.

The Rector of Long Melford, close by, the Rev. G. Martin, had a family of sixteen children. The Hyde Parkers, who own the lovely Elizabethan mansion facing the village highway, had a family of eight girls and three boys, and Mrs Bull's sister, Mrs Fisher, who lived in Long Melford, had a family of twelve. So these four families, closely related, could muster between them no less than fifty-six boys and girls.

The Rev. Henry Bull was at one time either a Fellow or Gentleman Commoner of Trinity College, Cambridge, for he had in his cellar large stocks of the famous Trinity Audit Ale which is obtainable only by past and present Fellows of the College.

The Rectory was comparatively a new building, but it was generally believed that it was built on the foundations of an old convent, which accounted for the ghostly nun who (or which) I saw several times. The ghostly coach-and-four I heard sweep down the much-too-narrow lane beside the Rectory so often that I used to sleep through the noise, and a variety of disconcerting incidents happened. I could easily write a column or two on our experiences at Borley, but I should want the loan of Harry Price's book to keep my dates in order, as it is fifty-six years since I first saw Borley.

Mr Jeffrey's important contribution to the evidence for the early haunting of Borley Rectory is of exceptional value because it corroborates the testimony of the Misses Bull, Mrs Byford, Mr Boyden, and other witnesses who write of the same period.

It is curious that the Rev. Felix Bull should have had a physical medium in his employ as a maid-servant. I doubt whether it was a Poltergeist. What Mr Jeffrey saw was a display of physical phenomena (telekinesis), under exceptionally good conditions.

It is also interesting to learn that, even in 1885, the tradition was current that the Rectory had been built on the site of a monastery or convent.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, half squire, half parson.—H.P.

Finally, what a perfect word-picture Mr Jeffrey paints of the Bulls towards the end of the nineteenth century! What a jolly family they must have been! No wonder they wanted a house with about thirty rooms in it! In contradistinction to the happy times remembered and pictured by Mr Jeffrey, what a tragic fate overtook the Rectory! When I first saw the house in 1929 it was dismal, dilapidated, cold, silent, and Poltergeist-infested. Certainly, the Poltergeists were there in 1885, but I fancy they were a merrier and more good-natured lot than those spiteful and bottle-throwing 'entities' that so plagued the Smiths and the Foysters. Poltergeists are proverbially fond of young children (especially girls), and the presence of so many of them—whether fourteen or seventeen—during the period of which Mr Jeffrey writes, may have had an ameliorating effect on the unseen—though by no means unheard!—inhabitants of the Rectory.

The reader has now been presented with fresh evidence for the haunting of Borley Rectory—evidence covering a period of a century, and much of it first-hand. This evidence, plus the testimony of the hundred witnesses whose names are given in *The Most Haunted House in England*, plus the additional corroborative and documentary reports that I have reproduced in the present volume, make the Borley case outstandingly the best-evidenced, the best-authenticated, and certainly the most-documented story of a 'haunted house' in the annals of psychical research. And no other case has been investigated for so long a period (sixteen years), or by so many cultured people of repute, or so thoroughly.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME READERS' QUERIES ANSWERED

AS I mentioned in another chapter, when *The Most Haunted House in England* was published I received some hundreds of letters from readers who were interested enough to write to me for elucidation on certain points mentioned in my monograph. In some cases I blame myself for not anticipating these questions and answering them in my book. But one cannot think of everything. And a few of the letters raised points which, I admit, had not occurred to me. So I will answer some scores of them now. This is not so alarming as it sounds, as many readers asked the same question. I will, therefore, take a cross-section of the correspondence and give my replies.

At least a hundred of the queries concern the 'nun,' and as I am presuming that the reader of this book has *not* read the previous account of the Borley happenings, I will mention briefly what we discovered about her—or it—and how we received our information.

I am indebted to Mr S. H. Glanville, his family, and his friends, for the little we know about the 'nun.' Mr Glanville is not a spiritualist, and, until he took an interest in the Borley case, knew nothing about table-turning or table-tipping, or the technique employed in obtaining 'information' via the Planchette, or Ouija Board. But he and his friends decided to try these methods in an attempt to contact the 'entities' alleged to manifest themselves by the means I have described. And they did, in fact, receive some information, diverse and contradictory, as invariably happens when mechanical means are employed in order to get in touch with the 'spirits.' But the information was interesting—and remarkable.

I will here interpolate a few remarks about what I think of Planchette. A Planchette is a heart-shaped piece of wood with two small pentagraph wheels or casters at the top, and a lead

pencil at the apex of the heart, so that it moves easily over the paper when the fingers of the operator or operators are placed lightly on the board. It is alleged that the board moves, and the pencil writes, independently of the volition of the person or persons whose hands rest upon it. In other words, that the 'spirits' move it. Orthodox science explains it by asserting that the board is moved by the unconscious muscular action of the sitters possessed by a 'dominant idea'—that is, 'an idea fixed in the minds of the operators; by the power of habit or otherwise, and automatically influencing, controlling, or directing their mental action or outward conduct; or automatically influencing or deciding their physical condition or action.' This same argument is put forth to 'explain' hypnotism (which it does *not*), religious fanaticism, faith-cures, dreams, and other abnormal phenomena. Whatever the real explanation may be, Planchette *works* (with some people, but not with me), and, as I have stated, some remarkable 'messages' were obtained by Mr Glanville and his friends as the little pencil travelled over the paper. This technique proved so successful, and such quantities of script were being produced, that, finally, my friend was compelled to employ *rolls of wallpaper* in order to record all the strange names, places, and statements that the 'entities'—subconscious human or spiritual—seemed so anxious to convey. It is also alleged that the mechanism of table-tipping can be explained in terms of the 'dominant idea.'

The first experiments were made with a small table which (when the sitters had their hands lightly resting on it) used to rock once for 'No,' twice for 'Uncertain,' and thrice for 'Yes,' in answer to questions put to it. Some of these questions concerned the nun, who was stated to be unhappy where she was, and would be made happy by a 'Christian burial.' That is, if the sitters could find her remains.

The sitters were told definitely that she was buried in the garden, 'near the house'; near a path on the south-west side of the house; that she was buried under trees; that she was buried *not* in a coffin, and *not* under a stone. A few moments later the sitters were informed that she *was* buried under a stone, a small

stone, with 'B' on it, that was let into the path. Again the question was asked, 'Are you certain she is under the stone?' And the answer came quite definitely, 'Yes.' All this information was obtained at the Rectory itself, at two séances held on October 23 and 25, 1937.

Miss Helen Glanville (now Mrs George Carter) was told about some experiments with Planchette and table-tipping, *but was given no details* (thus ruling out suggestion from that quarter). She had never used a Planchette previously, but a few days after the Borley séances she thought she would try the heart-shaped board. This she did at her own home, and by herself (on October 28, 1937). She obtained remarkable results. In fact, the information received was so interesting that it eventually led to the formulation of a theory as to who the nun was, and to our determination to find her remains, if possible.

#### THE NAME OF THE NUN

What Miss Glanville discovered when examining the various 'scripts' that were produced was that the name of the nun was 'Lairre,' and that the nunnery from whence she came was situated at Havre. In using the Planchette, one usually asks the questions aloud, and it is the written answers to these spoken questions that provide the information. It is significant that the name of the novice, which here emerged for the first time, was given to a girl of about the same age as the nun, alone, and speaking *direct* to the 'entity.' It is also significant that, *without* a question being asked, the first writing to appear on the script was 'Marianne' (i.e., Mrs Foyster), the name that had so often appeared in messages scribbled on the Rectory walls and on bits of paper. So here, in a home at Streatham, was appearing the same appeal to 'Marianne' as had so often been seen on the distempered walls of a derelict rectory, seventy miles away. If there is anything at all in Planchette writing, then I believe that the nun would not have revealed herself to anyone except a sympathetic girl of her own age, or to a young woman such as Mrs Marianne Foyster.

Other information that the 'nun' conveyed—via Planchette—

to Miss Glanville was that she was buried 'in the garden,' thus confirming the table-tipping 'evidence.' I will not anticipate too much, but the remains we eventually discovered were found under the cellar floor. But they may have been transferred from the garden.

Again, *without* a question being asked, the 'entity' asked for 'Mass and prayers'—exactly as it did at Borley, on many occasions. The nun said she wanted the Mass said 'in the house'—that is, Borley Rectory. She also said that she was once at a nunnery at Bures, a few miles from Borley. What is more important, she said that the date of her death was May 17, 1667.

The nun also hints that she was killed. She was 'hurt' when she passed over, and the last thing she remembered wanting on earth was 'water.' It was after this that she said the name of her nunnery was 'Havre,' so perhaps she rested for only a short time at Bures. She said the Havre nunnery belonged to a 'closed order.'

Miss Glanville's *solus* séance was so successful that, three days later, she repeated the experiment with her father, Mr S. H. Glanville, and her brother, Mr R. H. Glanville, and Mr Kerr-Pearse. This was on October 31, 1937.

The first question asked was: 'Who is there?' and very clearly came the reply 'Mary,' amplified in the next answer to 'Mary Lairre.' So the full name of the nun was then revealed. She said she was nineteen years old when she died. Again asked where she was buried, she said, 'At the end of the wall.' It *was* at the end of a wall, in the cellars, that we found some remains. She again asked for 'Chant, light, Mass.' Asked why, she said, 'I am unhappy.' Asked whether through her own fault, she said, 'No.' Asked *whose* fault it was that she was unhappy, she said, 'Waldegrave'—but omitted (unfortunately) to give his Christian name. The Waldegraves were the owners of Borley and district for centuries. Then came the startling information that she was murdered, by strangling, in 1667. The implication is that one of the young Waldegraves murdered her, and 'Mary Lairre' said that he took her away from Bures. She also said that she was French. She again asked for a Requiem Mass, for holy water,

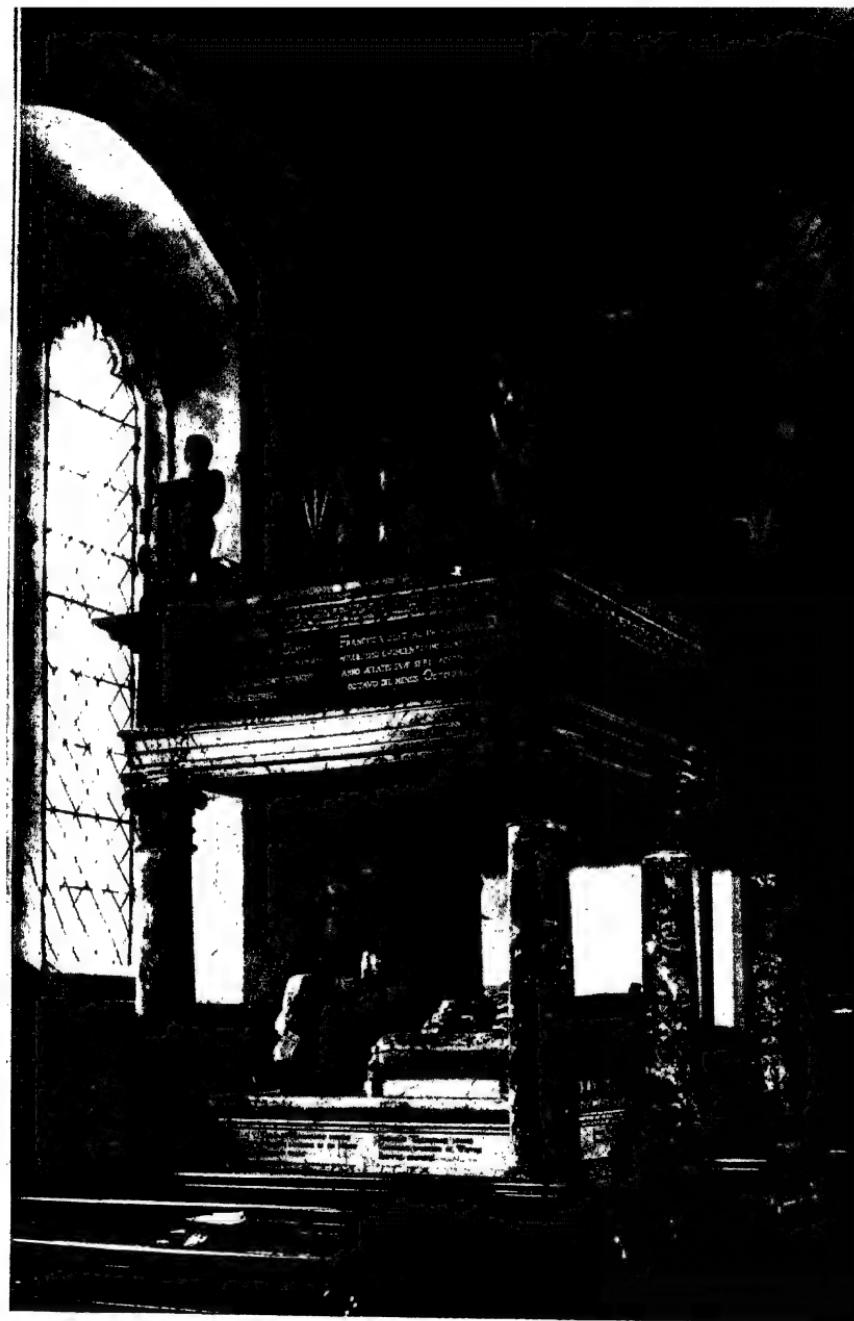


PLATE VI. THE WALDEGRAVE TOMB, BORLEY CHURCH

[See pp. 204 et seq.]

By courtesy of David E. Scherman



for incense, and for Christian burial. She again confirmed that she came from Havre.

So much for the exciting story of the nun; of events that were alleged to have taken place at Borley, but which were revealed in a London suburban drawing-room nearly three hundred years later. And the story is both reasonable and coherent: A young French novice comes from her nunnery at Havre; rests for a while at a similar establishment at Bures, near Borley; is removed by one of the young Waldegraves, who murders her by strangling. (A suggested motive for this will be given later in the volume.) The novice, wherever she is, appeals for a Christian burial, and, being a Roman Catholic, wants a Requiem Mass sung for her, and incense, holy water and—above all, *prayers*. She is unhappy, and wants to be at peace. It is remarkable that all these appeals were made, in a slightly different form, to another young woman, Mrs Marianne Foyster, six years previously, at Borley, seventy miles from Streatham. None of the Glanville family has ever met the Rev. L. A. Foyster or his wife. The full text of these table-tipping and Planchette writings is given in the next chapter.

#### CANON ANSON'S QUERIES

I will now deal with some of the letters concerning the nun that I received. The Rev. Canon Harold Anson, Master of the Temple, says (October 29, 1940): 'I have been wondering very much why no one ever tried to open up the nun's grave—it seems to me to have been the *obvious* thing to do, as an experiment—and why no Mass was celebrated.'

Of course, we wanted to find the remains, but where were we to dig? We were told that she was buried 'in the garden,' 'near the house,' 'under trees,' 'near the path,' 'under a large tree,' 'under a fir-tree,' 'near the greenhouse,' and so on. We were told, definitely, that she was *not* buried 'under the stone' (table-tipping) and, equally definitely, that she *was* buried under a stone with 'B' on it (also table-tipping). A few days later we were told definitely that she was *not* buried under a fir-tree! And then we were informed that she was to be found 'at the

end of the wall.' In other words, we did not know where to look. Most Planchette and similar messages are contradictory and usually ambiguous.

It might have been possible to have dug up the whole of the large garden, could we have obtained the necessary permission. But the property then belonged to Queen Anne's Bounty, and it is highly improbable that they would have allowed us to disfigure the garden and paths, etc., by digging for the nun, as they were trying to sell the property. And I was waiting for a more definite clue.

As for the stone with 'B' on it, this was merely a boundary-stone between two properties, placed there when the Rectory was built in 1863. At least a hundred readers wrote and asked why we did not dig under the stone. Canon Anson had purchased the *first* edition of my book. In the second edition published in March 1941, as we were being inundated with inquiries about the 'B' stone, I inserted a paragraph at p. 158 explaining our reason why we did not excavate there. I said: 'Séance "communications" are notoriously unreliable, and it would indeed be a phenomenon if this stone should have been placed, in 1863, over the exact spot where the remains of the nun were alleged to have been interred in 1667.' I repeat that I was waiting for a more definite 'lead,' and, as the reader will learn, this was eventually forthcoming.

As for Canon Anson's second query as to why no Mass was celebrated, we tried to find a Roman Catholic priest who would say this, *in the Rectory* (as requested), and failed. Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., also tried and failed. The trouble was, of course, that the property belonged to the Anglican ecclesiastical authorities, and they would have resented a Requiem Mass or hymn being sung in the Rectory for the repose of the soul of Marie Lairre. Several Requiem Masses have been sung since at Arundel and elsewhere.

Canon Anson raised another point. He says:

I wonder also how it is possible to imagine a nunnery existing in England in the seventeenth century. Except for the small Anglican community at Little Gidding, in Charles I's reign, there were no

religious houses in England, either Roman or Anglican, between 1558 and the nineteenth century, unless I am much mistaken.

I agree. But the nun was a French girl, and the implication is that she was inveigled to England (perhaps by one of the Waldegrave family), and murdered at Borley. Canon Phythian-Adams's convincing argument for this forms a separate chapter.

#### FRENCH NUNS IN ENGLAND

Mrs C. Ryan Baines, The Lodge, Lincombe Lane, Boar's Hill, Oxford, wrote to me on October 23, 1940, a few days before I received Canon Anson's letter, and she, too, refers to the nun. She says:

To my mind, the published fragments of the séance in which Mary Lairre communicated have the ring of truth. To account for the presence of a French nun in England in 1667 is, at first glance, impossible. . . . We do know, however, that the Restoration in 1660 was the date of the relaxation of the penal laws against Catholics in England. Charles II had been brought up in a Catholic court; both his mother and his wife were Catholics, in constant touch with religious bodies. Up till then English Catholics had educated their children in convents and monasteries abroad, and as a result, close communication was maintained between exiled Catholics and their fellow-Englishmen. The Waldegraves might quite well have been one of those Catholic families. . . . One of the Waldegraves might not have been a Catholic, or at any rate, intent on abducting Mary Lairre, as she herself states. He strangled her, perhaps killed the monk<sup>1</sup> who had intervened on her behalf, and the coach (which by that time in England would have been well established) drove off empty.

Mrs Ryan Baines—with many others—also asks why no Mass was said for the nun.

The Waldegraves were, of course, Catholics, and we shall have a good deal to say about them in a later chapter.

Mrs Ryan Baines also makes the interesting suggestion that the reason why the nun so persistently peered through the dining-room window (afterwards bricked-up; see Ground-floor Plan) was because the strange Italian marble mantelpiece was adorned

<sup>1</sup> 'Mary Lairre,' in answer to Miss Glanville's query as to where the monk (of the tradition) was buried, said she knew, but gave no particulars.—H. P.

with the busts of two evil-looking monks,<sup>1</sup> carved in multi-coloured marble, well executed, but sinister.

This mantelpiece (with another marble specimen in the drawing-room) was brought from Italy, and was fixed by Italian workmen. It was quite possible for anyone standing in the drive, and peering through the window (before it was blocked up), to see these monks plainly; in fact, the light of the bay window in the dining-room shone right on it. (See Plan.) The first time I saw the mantelpiece I concluded that the monks had been placed there in order to recall either the monastic site on which tradition said the Rectory was built; or, perhaps, to perpetuate in stone the legend of the monk and nun.

Miss Margaret C. Bruce, writing on November 22, 1943, from Durban, South Africa, said that the wells should be cleared out and that the remains of the nun or lay brother (of the legend) might be found in one of them. The main well *has* been cleared out several times during the past three hundred years. As for the wells in the cellar, these we tackled in August 1943, with what results will emerge later. The main well is ancient.

#### THE 'SMOKE' ON THE LAWN

The Rev. D. L. Booth, St Michael's Vicarage, Sutton Ings, Hull, suggests (December 2, 1943) that the nun might be found in the cats' cemetery; under the fir-tree; at the spot where smoke came up from the lawn; or under the stone marked 'B.' The reader knows why we did not dig up the trees or garden, and the reason why we did not disturb the stone. As for the smoke on the lawn, this requires a little explanation. In my previous monograph<sup>2</sup> is recorded a curious story: A painter named Hardy was one day painting the outside of the Rectory, just before my tenancy ended. Suddenly a fellow-workman called him into the library (overlooking the garden) and pointed to a column of smoke rising vertically from the centre of the lawn. They watched the smoke for about two minutes, and then it suddenly disappeared. The men immediately visited the spot, but could

<sup>1</sup> Shown in Plate IV of *The Most Haunted House in England*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 201-202.

find neither smoke nor fire, nor anything that could have given rise to such an illusion—if it was an illusion. No explanation was forthcoming.

#### THE DANCE OF THE GNATS?

However, Mr C. J. Cave, M.A., J.P., F.S.A., the meteorologist, writing (October 14, 1941) from Stoner Hill, Petersfield, says:

There was one phenomenon at Borley which it strikes me might be explained. Apparently, once smoke was seen rising from the lawn. Gnats, I think some particular species, sometimes 'dance' in a long column which looks exactly like smoke. I have seen it once in England, but I have often seen it in Italy. The first time was in the evening a little before sunset or thereabouts; little columns of what looked exactly like smoke were rising over fields and gardens; I took them for smoke at first, but they were in fact clouds of gnats.

Well, that is an explanation—perhaps the correct one. But the 'smoke' disappeared instantly as Mr Hardy and his friend looked at it, and there was no sign of gnats when they immediately investigated.

Miss M. G. Howell, of Langthorne Cottage, Little Canfield, Dunmow, Essex, raises the interesting point (February 6, 1943) as to whether the skull, which Mrs Smith found in the library cupboard, was part of the nun's remains. She says:

Might it not possibly have belonged to the nun in question? And if so, it would be still more interesting to find the body, which might prove to be headless. It is true that she was supposed to have been strangled, but some one at some time might have found the bones and removed the skull; or possibly a dog might have dug it up in the garden. Do you know whether the Rev. G. E. Smith submitted it to an anatomist before burying it?

Mr Smith *did* have the skull examined at the time, and expert medical opinion pronounced it as being that of—probably—a young woman. But there is no evidence to prove that it belonged to the nun. I think that if her remains *had* been found many more bones would have been retained by the finder—or all reburied. It is unlikely that only the skull would have been

preserved. And if the other remains had been reburied it is unthinkable that the skull would have been saved as a relic. Anyway, it was reverently buried in the churchyard by Mr Smith, so it is too late to do anything about it now. Another argument against the skull having once belonged to the nun is the fact that the nun-like figure has been seen *since* Mr Smith buried it—assuming, of course, that ghosts *do* stop haunting when their remains are found and given Christian burial. However, I am sorry that the approximate *age* of the skull was not ascertained. The fragments of bones which we found three feet under the cellar of the Rectory also included the temporal portion of a human skull and a left mandible (with five teeth *in situ*—see Plate XVIII), pronounced by expert opinion to be that of a 'woman under thirty.' But more of this in a later chapter.

The Rev. Stephen F. Sharp, writing from Datchworth Rectory, Knebworth, Herts, approaches the Mass-and-nun question from a new angle. Assuming that there *was*, anciently, a monastery on the site of Borley Rectory, he says (August 17, 1938):

I note that the trouble dates from scandal in the old monastery houses. May I suggest that the Mother-Houses of the Order should be communicated with and acquainted with the facts, and asked to undertake a novena of reparation? I believe that this course proved entirely successful in getting rid of similar annoyances in a rectory in the North of England. I have a great belief in using spiritual weapons, but fancy they must be backed by a vivid faith and coupled with a strong personal devotion. That is, I don't think they can be used experimentally, but only with a definite confidence in their power.

When Mr Sharp wrote to me my monograph on Borley had not been published, and he had seen only the newspaper reports. In these it was positively stated that a monastery had existed, at a remote period, at Borley. This question has, however, not been definitely settled, and we cannot obtain positive evidence to support such a theory. But it is significant that 'Mary Lairre' refers to monks, and another entity states that 'Fadenoch' (Father Enoch?) was a member of the monastery. 'Mary Lairre' also states that the monk was of the Order of St Benedict,

and that he was buried 'at Borley.' She refused to amplify this information. As a matter of fact, the Benedictines *were* communicated with, but no action appears to have been taken. I believe, too, that Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., interested himself in the matter. What we *do* know about Borley is that Edward III gave the manor to the Prior and Community of Christ Church, Canterbury, in 1362, in exchange for the rights and dues of the town and port of Sandwich.<sup>1</sup> So there is definite evidence that the Manor of Borley became the property of the Benedictine monks in the fourteenth century.

#### A BURES CONVENT?

Not only has it been declared that no monastery ever existed at Borley, but the 'nunnery at Bures' has also been called a complete myth. If this is so it would be interesting to learn how the 'nunnery' passed into tradition as part of the nun-and-monk legend. The 'Mary Lairre' Planchette scripts mention Bures several times. The nun declared that 'Waldegrave' took her away from a nunnery, or a similar establishment, at Bures.<sup>2</sup>

I have evidence, not very impressive, that there *was* some sort of establishment at Bures—some house that might be designated a nunnery, or a place where novices stayed, or perhaps only a convent school. Or it might have been a temporary resting-place for nuns or novices coming over from the Continent. My information comes from Mrs Susie J. Brand, of St Feock, Cornwall. In a long and interesting letter (dated January 5, 1943) Mrs Brand mentions that she and her family were friends of the Bulls, and her father-in-law, Edmund Brand, was a member of the Suffolk and Essex Hunt. So was the Rev. Henry Bull. She has known Borley Rectory for many years.

Mrs Brand and her husband lived at Bures<sup>3</sup> for eleven years

<sup>1</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum*, by Sir William Dugdale (London, 1655-73).

<sup>2</sup> There is a Bures-Londinières in Normandy, 15½ miles from Dieppe, on the Dieppe-Paris line. This particular Bures is a village with a fine Gothic church of the twelfth to thirteenth century. It is conceivable that the nun entity was confusing the Normandy Bures with its Essex namesake, though I can find no mention of a nunnery in the French village. It is significant that 'Mary Lairre' said she came from 'Havre.' Le Havre is also in Normandy.

<sup>3</sup> At Stone House, an old toll gatehouse, on the road between Colchester and Cambridge.

(1910-21), and she says, 'The nunnery was then used as a private house.' In a further letter (January 13, 1943) she remarks that the nunnery had then no particular interest for her, 'excepting from the view of being picturesque.' Mrs Brand is kindly trying to procure for me a photograph of the Bures nunnery, but has not yet succeeded. So I think we can assume that there is some house in Bures which was at one time used for conventional purposes. Perhaps this fact accounts for the 'nunnery' part of the legend.

#### 'SPIRIT' PHOTOGRAPHS

I will conclude this chapter on my correspondents' queries with some remarks on 'spirit photographs.' Before my previous monograph was published Mr F. A. Mansbridge, an official of the Bank of England, and one of the appointed observers during my tenancy at the Rectory, wrote to say that when printing some films of the Blue Room that he had taken he saw a distinct 'face' on the wall of the recess to the right of the mantelpiece. He sent me both print and negative, and, with a little imagination, one can make out a sort of head of a person with eyes, nose, etc. But I pointed out to him that 'faces' can often be seen on surfaces, uneven or broken, such as walls, backgrounds of trees, on the pattern of a carpet, or in the glowing embers of a fire. I told Mr Mansbridge that his 'face' was due primarily to normal irregularities on the Blue Room wall, plus a certain subconscious elaboration of details in the mind of the person looking at the picture. When I received Mr Mansbridge's print I examined the Blue Room, but this visual illusion was not apparent on the wall itself.

When *The Most Haunted House in England* was published a number of readers wrote to say they had discovered faces or figures in some of the plates. The Rev. N. C. Murray, of The Vicarage, Ainstable, Carlisle, in a letter (March 20, 1941) said he thought he could discern a face by the side of the arch outside 'the Blue Room (Plate III). I told Mr Murray that I too could see a 'face,' but thought it was caused by the unevenness of the wall, or marks on the distemper.

Mr G. Stewart Pople, Registrar of Births, Deaths, etc., an official of the West Sussex County Council, writing from Bognor (January 27, 1941), pointed out that in Plate I of my book is a distinct figure of a nun, or a woman, on the lawn, standing between the large summer-house and the Nun's Walk. I must admit that, with *no* imagination, the figure *can* be seen in every copy of the book that I have examined, and also in the original photograph. As Mr Pople points out, the figure appears to be dressed in clothes of the period of about 1870: full sleeves, a full skirt, and with a sort of shawl covering her head. The figure is about an inch high. But I am convinced that the picture is an illusion. The head and face are formed out of the background of trees, and the skirt is due to the uneven lighting of the lawn. But the figure is quite clear. To those readers who possess copies of *The Most Haunted House in England* and who would like to see the 'ghost' for themselves, I would point out that the figure is on Plate I, bottom left-hand picture, and exactly one and a quarter inches from the extreme *left* of the photograph. The figure itself is exactly midway between the top and bottom edges of the photograph. The face is rather ancient-looking, with a hook nose. It has been pointed out to me that it is also possible to imagine a similar figure one and a half inches from the *right* of the picture!

When my Borley article<sup>1</sup> appeared in *Everybody's* Mr Edward G. Sergeant, 10 Knolley's House, Tavistock Place, London, W.C.1, wrote to point out that he, and several other readers, could see a figure of a nun standing by the gateway of the Rectory in the photograph reproduced in *Everybody's*. This same picture appeared in my book.<sup>2</sup> This is the gate at which Fred Cartwright saw the nun waiting in 1927. Again we have a background of trees, and it is possible to picture some sort of figure formed by the foliage. But the illusion is not very good. Miss Laura B. Rawsthorn, of Kirkland, Washington, D.C., also (March 8, 1945) calls my attention to 'faces of old men, lions, tigers, and a "long-nosed man"' on the walls pictured in Plate III of my monograph.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Ghost of Borley Rectory.' <sup>2</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, Plate II.

I have introduced this question of 'spirit photographs' (concerning which I am completely sceptical) to warn readers to be on their guard against seeing something that does not exist. When no question of individual identity is involved, but merely that of recognition of a human face, any three random marks that are not too far apart or too divergent in size will, of course, produce a 'face.' (An example of this is the three peculiar spots, one of which is the soft germ-pore, on the upper end of a coconut, which gives it a striking resemblance to the face of a monkey.) Imagination does the rest.<sup>1</sup>

Well, I hope that the above letters—a few out of many—from my correspondents, with my replies, have interested the reader. Whether he has read my previous book or not, the questions involved are relevant to the latest developments of the Borley drama—my chief reason for including them.

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive essay on 'spirit photographs,' especially the fraudulent aspect, see my *Confessions of a Ghost-hunter* (London, 1936), pp. 168–208.

CHAPTER VIII  
THE LOCKED BOOK

BEFORE me, as I begin this chapter, is a book, size  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches, on the morocco binding of which is inscribed in gilt letters: '*The Haunting of Borley Rectory: Private and Confidential Report*, by S. H. Glanville, 1937-1938.' The book contains 360 pages, typed, and the contents are excluded from prying eyes by means of a Bramah lock. (See Plate V.)

The contents were compiled by my chief official observer, Mr S. H. Glanville, during his investigation of Borley Rectory during the years 1937 and 1938, the period of my tenancy of the Rectory. If all other existing records of Borley were to be destroyed, and only the 'locked book' was saved, it would form a complete history—textually, documentally, and pictorially—of the haunting of Borley Rectory until its destruction by fire on the night of February 27-28, 1939.

The contents of the book include: copies of all correspondence; complete plans, drawings, and photographs of the Rectory; documents in facsimile; wall-writings in facsimile; extracts from registers of births, deaths, and marriages; epitaphs and information from headstones and the 'storied urn'; family histories; ecclesiastical notes; complete and verbatim records of séances, and much information gleaned through both table-tipping and Planchette scripts; verbatim reports of interviews with many persons connected with the case, and names of witnesses; verbatim reports of investigators; local gossip and villagers' tales; articles on Borley extracted from journals; advertisements and newspaper cuttings; etc., etc.

The book was deposited in the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature, in the University of London, in January 1940, and nearly five years later I withdrew it temporarily from my library for use in compiling the present volume. No one has seen the full contents except Mr Glanville and myself, and in returning

the book to me, Miss M. S. Quinn, Sub-Librarian of the University, says (November 29, 1944):

DEAR MR PRICE,

Under separate cover and by registered post I am forwarding to you the locked book and its keys, from the Harry Price Library, as you request. It has been packed away in the Strong-room here since you sent it to me and has never been opened.

It must be obvious to the reader why such care has been taken to prevent the book from falling into unauthorized hands: it contains the names and alleged doings of several living persons who might be pained if the very intimate details of their—alleged—acts were made public. And some of the Planchette scripts and table-tipping 'information' is demonstrably untrue. For example, the 'entities' alleged to operate the Planchette have sometimes proved to be, not spirits, but *living* persons residing many miles away! These curious results were due, I think, to unconscious muscular action on the part of the Planchette sitters, who, without being aware of the fact, drew on their subconscious minds and automatically recorded the 'messages,' etc.

Of course, some of the information, and many of the plans and photographs in the 'locked book' (which will for ever be a model for psychical researchers as to how a report should be prepared), have already been published in *The Most Haunted House in England*. In the last chapter I told how we discovered the name of the nun, her age, how she died, etc. This information was taken from the extracts from Planchette scripts, etc., that were published in my last Borley book.<sup>1</sup> But these were merely abridgments, and, to be quite honest, I did not then attach to these scripts, etc., the importance that I am now inclined to place upon them. Also, I found readers greatly interested in the scripts, and I have received from them new interpretations and suggestions concerning some of the messages, that have been helpful. Finally, for the sake of completeness, and because I want to make the history of the Borley hauntings as perfect as possible, I have decided to reproduce from the 'locked book' the full and verbatim records of several of the Planchette and table-tipping séances,

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 153-165.

most of which have not hitherto been published. For the reasons given, I am still compelled to suppress the names of many persons and places. But I will hasten to add that if every one of the records that we possess was printed, *verbatim et literatim*, it would not help us to solve the problem of the haunting, and would shed no further light on the history of the 'nun.' No, the suppressed names or passages are concerned almost entirely with the alleged private affairs of many people, some of whom are dead.

#### A THREAT FULFILLED

In the last chapter I remarked that 'most Planchette and similar messages are contradictory and usually ambiguous.' But Miss Glanville and her brother received (March 27, 1938) a Planchette script that was neither contradictory nor ambiguous. The séance was held at their home at Streatham. Here are the questions and answers:

Does anyone want to speak to us? *Yes.*

Who are you? *Sunex Amures and one of his men* [indistinct] *mean to burn the Rectory to-night at nine o'clock end of the haunting go to the Rectory and you will be able to see us enter into our own and under the ruins you will find bone of murdered* [indistinct] *wardens* [not clear] *under the ruins mean you to have proof of haunting of the Rectory at Borley* [indistinct] *the understanding of which gamenl* [large full stop written] *game tells the story of murder which happened there.*

In which room will the fire start? *Over the hall. Yes, yes, you must go if you want proof.*

Why cannot you give us proof here? *We will.*

Well, here is a definite threat to burn down the Rectory; a definite statement that the fire would start 'over the hall'; and a definite assertion that 'under the ruins' would be found the 'bone of murdered. . . .' 'Under the ruins' is emphasized by being repeated.

And now for the fulfilment. The Rectory *was* burned at midnight on February 27, 1939; the first part of the building to be destroyed *was* 'over the hall,' the fire being caused by the upsetting of an oil-lamp *in* the hall; and we found a 'bone under the ruins' in August 1943.

I must emphasize that my book was not published when the

fire occurred, and no one connected with the Rectory knew about the Planchette 'threat.' It is true that the fire was not 'to-night at nine o'clock' as promised, but I reiterate that these séance messages cannot be taken literally. When Mr Glanville sent me his report I must admit that I did not take 'Sunex Amures' very seriously. When the fire occurred I was more impressed. When we found the bones 'under the ruins' I was much more impressed, though it was *not* on account of the 'Sunex Amures' message that we began digging in the cellar: it was because Canon Phythian-Adams had made out such a good case for excavating at this particular spot. It is significant that 'Sunex Amures' tells us—in effect—to dig 'under the *ruins*.' Thousands of houses are damaged by fire without the buildings becoming 'ruins.' But Borley Rectory (which burnt for eight hours) was, literally, a mass of ruins—as 'Sunex Amures' anticipated—or promised! And the 'entity' wanted us to have 'proof of haunting.' Well, if the fire had never occurred we never should have received permission to dig up the cellars, because the house would have been occupied. And if we had never found the few remains that we unearthed it is doubtful if this 'sequel' to the Borley story would ever have been written. So 'Sunex Amures'—or some one—did us a good turn when the Rectory went up in smoke.

I will now give the reader the full texts of the Planchette and table-tipping records (extracts from which appeared in *The Most Haunted House in England*<sup>1</sup>), together with the full texts<sup>2</sup> of other séance scripts, not previously published.

#### SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 23, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 23, 1937. It was held in the passage just outside the kitchen (see Plan II), beginning at 9.55 P.M. and ending at 10.30 P.M. Sitters: Squadron-Leader Alan J. Cuthbert, Squadron-Leader R. H. Glanville, and Mr M. Kerr-Pearse.

The report begins:

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 153-162.

<sup>2</sup> These form folios 134-160 of the 'locked book.'

Almost at once the table felt alive, and within two minutes was rocking backwards and forwards. During the sitting we all experienced an icy cold draught which was generally most noticeable when the table was rocking violently. A. J. Cuthbert noticed an icy draught behind his ears, and Kerr-Pearse got the impression that there was a 'presence' behind Cuthbert's right shoulder. R. H. Glanville had the feeling that we were being watched. The code used was: one rock of the table for 'No'; two for 'Uncertain'; and three for 'Yes.' When a word was to be spelled out the table started rocking and we went through the alphabet in time with it, the table stopping at the letter to be indicated. Almost without exception, we went through the alphabet once before arriving at the letter wanted, and on some occasions, twice. This made the spelling of words a slow and laborious procedure, as we found it was also necessary to check up continually. At times the rocking was slow and deliberate, and at others so fast that it was almost impossible to keep pace with it. The table was extremely light, having been made expressly for this purpose. It is 2 feet 2 inches high, and 12 inches square.

The results obtained are as follows:

Is some one there? *Yes.*

Who are you? Will you spell your name? *Tfisme.*

Will you please repeat? *Tfismong.* [Then very indistinct and uncertain.]

Are you a man or a woman? [Uncertain.]

Is your name 'X'? *No.*

Is your name 'Y'? *No.*

Have you lived here before? *Yes.*

What is your age? *91.*

Have you a message for 'Z'? *No.*

Have you a message for anyone here? *No.*

Have you a message? *Yes.*

Will you please spell it? *If-chant-Mass-light-erel-caedo.*

Is it 'erel-caedo'? *Yes.*

Is 'erel' an abbreviation? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Blarnui.*

[We were forced to close the above early part of the sitting because we were very tired and found it most difficult to keep in touch and at the same time remember all the answers given. At the portion of sitting that follows we stopped at intervals to record the replies. Except for a very faint glow (moonlight) from the kitchen window, we sat in complete darkness. An electric torch covered with a handkerchief was used when writing replies.]

[The sitting resumed. The moment our hands touched the table it became 'alive.']}

Is your message 'If chant mass light erel caedo blarnu ipse'? *Yes.*  
What is 'erel' in full? *Erelmno.*

Do you mean Erelmno? *Yes.*

Can you indicate the date you died? [Indistinct reply.]

Have you lived in this present house before? *Yes.*

Are you 'X'? *No.*

Are you 'Y'? *No.*

Will you spell your name? [A name is given.]

Is it [repeating the name]? *Yes.*

Then you are 'X'? *Yes.*

Did something unfortunate happen? *Yes.*

Do you mind these questions? *No.*

Are you sure you do not mind these questions? *Yes.*

Are you angry with us? *No.*

Can we help you? *Yes.*

Will light, Mass, etc., help you? *Yes.*

KERR-PEARSE: Do you remember me? I've been here before. *Yes.*

Do you mind my being in the house alone? *No.*

I am staying here this week—is there any danger? *No.*

Did you write the messages on the walls? *No.*

Can you tell us who did? *Yes.*

Who was it? Can you spell it out? *Oif . . .* [Then indistinct.]

Is 'Oif' correct? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? [Indecipherable.]

Was it a man? *No.*

Was it a child? *No.*

Was it a woman? *No.*

Is anyone there? [No answer.]

Is it 'Blarnu'? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Ip . . .*

Is it 'ipse'? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? [Three times through the alphabet very quickly.]

Is that the end of the message? *Yes.*

We are feeling very tired; can we continue later? *Yes.*

#### SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 24, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 24, 1937.  
It was held in the Base Room (see Plan II), beginning at 1.15 A.M. and ending at 1.45 A.M. Sitters: M. Kerr-Pearse,

R. H. Glanville, and A. J. Cuthbert. The séance was held in the dark, except for the light from the fire.

Are you there? [Table leaned over at angle of 45°.]

Will you please spell your name? *Caldibec*. [This name was confirmed.]

Are you a man? *Yes*.

Have you lived in this house before? *Yes*.

As it is at present? *Yes*.

Did you live here before 'A'? *Yes*.

Did you live here before 'B'? *No*.

Are you his son? *No*.

Are you a relative? *No*.

Are you a friend? *Yes*.

Are you his wife? *Yes*.

Then you are a woman? *Yes*.

Is 'B' unhappy? *Yes*.

Can we help? *Yes*.

By chant, light, Mass, and prayer? *Yes*.

Upstairs? *No*.

Downstairs? *Yes*.

In the kitchen passage? *No*.

In the kitchen? *Yes*.

Was 'B' connected with the tragedy? *Yes*.

Was the tragedy connected with the well? *No*.

Did 'C' die a natural death? *No*.

Was she shot? *No*.

Was she poisoned? *No*.

Did you poison her? *No*.

Did 'G' poison her? *Yes*.

Can you give us a sign or a rap? *No*.

Can you answer some more questions? *Yes*.

Will you please wait a little, as we are tired? *Yes*.

[Séance ended at 1.45 A.M., but recommenced at 2 A.M.]

Are you still there? *Yes*.

Have you a pet name? *Yes*.

Will you please tell us your Christian name? *Yes*.

Will you please spell it out? *Yes*.

Will you please start? *Jane*.

Is it Jane? *No*.

Is it Janet? *No*.

Will you please give us the fifth letter? *N*.

And the next? [Three times through the alphabet, without result.]

Is your name 'Janen'? *Yes.*

Will you tell us your maiden surname? [Uncertain.]

Will you spell it? [Uncertain.]

Do you remember it? *No.*

Do you find it difficult to communicate in this room? *No.*

Would another part of the house be easier? *No.*

Is the fire too bright? *No.*

Is there too much light? *No.*

Is there anything we can do to make it easier? *No.*

Do you meet your son? *Yes.*

Is he happy? *No.*

Has he money troubles? [Uncertain.]

Are there money troubles? [Uncertain.]

Did he die in this house? *Yes.*

Did he die a natural death? *No.*

Was he poisoned? *Yes.*

Are you sure? [Uncertain.]

Did —— poison him? *No.*

Do you think you know? [Uncertain.]

Did you rather we did not ask these questions? *Yes.*

Are you certain you would like light, Mass, prayers, etc., in the kitchen? *Yes.* [Very decidedly.]

Can we help you in any other way? *No.*

Can we stop now? *Yes.*

Can we talk with you to-morrow? *Yes.*

Good night, and thank you.

#### SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 24, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 24, 1937. It was held in the kitchen (see Plan II), beginning at 6.50 P.M. and ending at 9.44 P.M. Sitters: A. J. Cuthbert, S. H. Glanville, R. H. Glanville, and M. Kerr-Pearse.

Is anyone there? *Yes.*

Is it 'X'? *Yes.*

Did you know 'A'? *No.*

Did you wish to speak to her? *No.*

Did you die naturally? *No.*

Were you shot? *No.*

Were you poisoned? *No.*

Were you killed? *Yes.*

Can you spell it? *Lanvoisefaidf.*

Did —— die naturally? *No.*

Was he killed? *No.*

Was he poisoned? *Yes.*

[At this point they failed to receive replies, so moved into the passage, taking up the same position outside the sewing-room as previously.]

Are you ‘X’? *No.*

Will you please spell your name? *Kat.*

Is it Kate? *No.*

Is it Katie? *Yes.*

Have you a message? *Yes.*

Will you please spell it out? *Light, Mass, erslre.*

[Then no further replies.]

Are you there? *Yes.*

Are you ‘X’? *No.*

Are you Katie? *No.*

Are you Caldibec? *Yes.*

Are you the wife of ‘B’? *Yes.*

Have you a message for us? *Yes.*

Will you spell it out? *Ainrri.* [Then no more.]

Are you there? [No answer.]

Are you there? *Yes.*

Are you tired? *Yes.*

Shall we stop? *Yes.*

Is your power gone? *Yes.*

Do you wish to rest? *Yes.*

May we return later? *Yes.* [Weak.]

Had we better go to another part of the house? *Yes.*

Upstairs? *Yes.*

Landing? *No.*

End bedroom? *Yes.*

Is ‘X’ there? *Yes.* [Definitely.]

Are you certain you are tired? *Yes.*

Good night, and thank you.

#### SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 24, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 24, 1937. It began at 10.20 P.M. in Room 7, and ended at 2 A.M. on the landing. No illumination was used. Sitters: S. H. Glanville, R. H. Glanville, A. J. Cuthbert, and M. Kerr-Pearse. This was the third séance held on this day.

Are you there? *Yes.*

Will you please spell who you are? [Reply unintelligible.]

Have you a message? *Get . . .* [Then indistinct.]

Have you difficulty in communicating with us? *Yes.*

Is there too much light? *Yes.* [Moon then shining into room.]

Would the passage be easier? *Yes.*

Are you 'X'? *Yes.*

[At this point sitters removed to passage outside the Blue Room.]

Are you there? *Yes.*

Is that 'X'? *Yes.*

Have you a message for us? *Yes.*

Will you please spell it out? *My or . . .* [Then indistinct.]

Do you mean misfortune? *Yes.*

Can we help? *Yes.*

Have you a message? *Yes.*

Will you please spell it out? *Ask.*

Do you mean 'ask'? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Mass.*

The next word, please? *Light.*

Do you mean 'light'? *Yes.*

What sort of light? *Candles?* *Yes.*

As in a Roman Catholic church? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Pr. . .*

Do you mean 'prayer'? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Get.*

Do you mean 'get'? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Chant. . .*

Do you mean 'chant'? *Yes.*

Is that all? *Yes.*

Did you give us a message last night? *Yes.*

In Latin? *Yes.*

Was it 'Caedo blarnu ipse'? *Yes.*

Was there any more? *Yes.*

Will you please continue? *Ibiai . . .* [Then indistinct.]

[A pause for refreshments was made here.]

Are you 'X'? *No.*

Are you 'Y'? *Yes.*

Was 'Ceai' correct? *Yes.*

The next letter, please? *H-E-Adseihwesab.*

Are you 'Y'? *Yes.*

Was your message a legal one? *No.*  
 Did you write the messages? *No.*  
 Did the coat appear in your room? *No.*  
 Shall we leave it there? *Yes.*  
 Does it belong to some one you know? *Yes.*  
 To 'G'? *No.*  
 To a woman? *Yes.*  
 To a relative? *No.*  
 To a friend? *Yes.*  
 Is she alive? *Yes.*  
 Does she live near here? *Yes.*  
 Has she been in the house lately? *No.*  
 Will she come again? *No.*  
 Did you know Mr and Mrs M.? *Yes.*  
 Did you like them? *Yes.*  
 Did they help you? *Yes.*  
 Do you know the Rev. A. C. Henning? *Yes.*  
 Does he come here? *Yes.*  
 Could he help you? *Yes.*  
 By saying and having 'light, Mass, prayers,' etc.? *Yes.*  
 In your room? *No.*  
 In the passage here? *No.*  
 In the chapel? *No.*  
 In the village church? *No.*  
 In the house? *No.*  
 In the house downstairs? *No.*  
 In the kitchen passage? *No.*  
 In the kitchen? *Yes.*  
 Has the kitchen anything to do with your death? *No.*  
 Has the kitchen anything to do with the misfortune in this house?  
*Yes.*  
 Was — the cause of the trouble? *Yes.*  
 Concerning yourself? *Yes.*  
 Concerning the story of the nun? *No.*  
 Did the nun die violently here? *No.*  
 Was — the cause of the present trouble? *No.*  
 Did it start with —? *No.*  
 Was it before his time? *Yes.*  
 Was it long before his time? *No.*  
 In this house? *Yes.*  
 This house is supposed to be haunted. Was it haunted before —'s  
 time? [No reply.]  
 Was it haunted during his time? *Yes.*  
 Did — see the nun? *Yes.*

Has the nun left here? *No.*

Is she happy now? *No.*

Can we help her? *Yes.*

By a service? *No.*

By a Christian burial? *Yes.*

Is she in the garden? *Yes.* [Very definite.]

Shall we see her? *No.*

Is she near the house? *Yes.*

Is anyone buried in the garden? *Yes.* [Definite.]

Has there been a burial in the garden during your time? *No.*

Has anyone been buried in the garden? *Yes.*

Only the nun? *Yes.*

No one else? *No.*

Is she buried under the house? *No.*

Near the house? *Yes.*

Could we find her? *Yes.*

Is she deeply buried? *No.*

Is she buried near the summer-house? *No.*

On the east of the house? *No.*

On the north of the house? *No.*

On the south of the house? *Yes.*

On the west of the house? *Yes.*

On the south-west of the house? *Yes.* [Definitely.]

Is she buried under trees? *Yes.*

Is she buried in a coffin? *No.*

Is she buried under a stone? *No.*

Is she buried under a cedar-tree? *No.*

Is she buried near the low brick wall? *No.*

Is she buried under the path by the south-west of the house? *Yes.*

Is she buried near the path? *Yes.*

Has she ever been found? *No.*

Is she buried within two yards of the path? *Yes.*

Is she buried near the greenhouse? *No.*

Is she buried near the stables? *No.*

Is she buried by the earthen bowl by the lawn? *No.*

Is she buried by the small pond? *No.*

Is she buried under a large tree? *Yes.*

Is she buried under a tree within two yards of the path? *Yes.*

Can you spell the name of the tree? *Yes.*

Do you know the kind of tree? *Yes.*

Can you spell its name? *Fi.*

Is 'fir' correct? *Yes.*

Within two yards of the fir-tree? *Yes.*

Is the fir-tree a large one? *Yes.*

Is the fir-tree near the vine by the corner of the house? *Yes.*

Are you certain? *Yes.* [Definite.]

Shall we have difficulty in finding the tree? *Yes.*

Has it been cut down? [No reply.]

Would she like us to look for her? *Yes.*

If we look for her, can we find her? *Yes.*

If we look for her, *shall* we find her? *Yes.*

Is she buried in the garden? *Yes.* [Definitely.]

Is she buried fairly near the greenhouse? *Yes.*

Is she buried more than three feet deep? *No.*

Is she buried under a small stone with 'B' on it, in the path? *Yes.*

Are you certain she is under the stone? *Yes.* [Definitely.]

[The séance then concluded.]

#### SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 25, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 25, 1937, on landing outside the Blue Room. It began at 1.40 A.M. and ended at 2 A.M. Sitters: S. H. Glanville, R. H. Glanville, and M. Kerr-Pearse.

Is the house still haunted? *Yes.* [Definitely.]

Is the movement of things part of the haunting? [No reply.]

Do you know what moves them? *Yes.*

Spell it. [No reply.]

Do *you* move things? *Yes.*

Did you move the tobacco-tin from the drawing-room? *No.*

Do you know when you move things? *No.*

Does cold interfere with your power? *No.*

Does light interfere with your power? *No.*

Does heat help you? *Yes.*

M. KERR-PEARSE: Do you like me? *Yes.*

R. H. GLANVILLE: Do you like me? *Yes.*

S. H. GLANVILLE: Do you like me? *Yes.*

Would it help you if we arranged for Mass to be sung soon in the kitchen? *Yes.*

Was the nun's name Caldibec? *No.*

Had your wife another name? *No.*

Was your wife's name Caldibec? *No.*

Can you spell the nun's name? [Four times through the alphabet but no reply.]

Is it a Biblical name? [No reply.]

Do you know who wrote the messages on the walls? *Yes.*

Did you write them? *No.*  
 Did the nun write them? *No.*  
 Did your wife write them? *No.*  
 Did Katie write them? *No.*  
 Did a human write them? *No.*  
 Did a man write them? *No.*  
 Did a woman write them? *No.*  
 Did a child write them? *No.*  
 Is it a type of being we do not understand? [Indefinite.]  
 Do you know 'M'? *Yes.*  
 Do you like her? *Yes.*  
 Do you know her husband? [Indefinite.]  
 Are you often in the house? *Yes.*  
 Are you often on the landing? *Yes.*  
 Do you go up and down the stairs? *Yes.*  
 In the library and old study? *No.*  
 Are you tired? *Yes.*  
 Shall we stop? *Yes.*

## SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 25, 1937 (TABLE-TIPPING)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 25, 1937. It was held in the Base Room (see Plan II). It began at 2.10 A.M. and finished at 3.5 A.M. The room was well lit by means of two lamps. Sitters: S. H. Glanville, R. H. Glanville, and M. Kerr-Pearse.

What is your name? [A name was given.]  
 Are you the wife of 'Z'? *Yes.*  
 Are you happy? *Yes.*  
 Do you see your husband? *Yes.*  
 Is he happy? *No.*  
 Do you have a 'control'? [No reply.]  
 Is anyone buried in the garden? *Yes.*  
 Who is it? *Fadenoch.* [Father Enoch?] *Yes.*  
 Was he a member of the monastery? *Yes.*  
 Was he Prior? *No.*  
 Was he a lay brother? *No.*  
 Was he a monk? *Yes.*  
 Was he a novice? [No reply.]  
 Was he a friend of the nun? [No reply.]  
 Had the burial been made before your lifetime? *Yes.*  
 Had the burial been made after your lifetime? *No.*  
 Is there evil in this house? *No.*

Was there evil in this house? *Yes.*  
 Is there now only good in this house? *Yes.*  
 Should the house be destroyed? *No.*  
 M. K.-P.: Do you know me? *Yes.*  
 M. K.-P.: Do you like me? *Yes.*  
 R. H. G.: Do you know me? *Yes.*  
 R. H. G.: Do you like me? *Yes.*  
 S. H. G.: Do you know me? *Yes.*  
 S. H. G.: Do you like me? *Yes.*  
 Do you like talking to us? *Yes.*  
 Are we wrong in asking these questions? *No.*  
 Are you Caldibec? *Yes.*  
 Is that your pet name? *Yes.*  
 Did your husband use it? *Yes.*  
 Did you call your husband —? *Yes.*  
 Did you know who wrote the messages on the walls? *Yes.*  
 Did you? *No.*  
 Did —? *No.*  
 Did —? *Yes.*  
 Did —? *No.*  
 Did Katie? *No.*  
 Will there be more messages? *Yes.*  
 Shall we see them? *Yes.*  
 Will you ask — to write a message? *Yes.*  
 In the hall, on the wall? *Yes.*  
 Soon, so that we can see it? *Yes.*  
 Do you know about the other messages? [No reply.]  
 Do you know about the later messages? [No reply.]  
 Do you know Mr —? *No.*  
 Do you know —? *Yes.*  
 Has — been forgiven? *No.*  
 Is — happier now? *No.*  
 Is — happier now? *Yes.*  
 Was — a servant here? *Yes.*  
 Was — your servant here? *Yes.*  
 Do you want to stop now? *Yes.*  
 Is the light too strong? *No.*  
 Then you really are feeling tired? *Yes.*  
 May we speak to you again later? *Yes.*  
 Good night, and thank you.

in Room No. 3 (see Plan III). It began at 4.15 A.M. and ended at 4.45 A.M. Sitters: S. H. Glanville, R. H. Glanville, and M. Kerr-Pearse. In complete darkness.

Are you there? *Yes.*

Who are you? *Jane.* [Definite.]

Same as in the library? *Yes.*

Is anyone else here? *Yes.*

Do you know —? *No.*

Do you know 'N'? *Yes.*

Was she a good influence? *No.*

Do you know —? *No.*

Do you know 'P'? *No.*

Do you spend much time in this room? *No.*

Did you come here because we are here? *Yes.*

Has anything important happened in this house? *Yes.*

Was it tragedy? *Yes.*

Was it connected with —? *No.*

Are you sure? *Yes.*

Do you know who it was? *Yes.*

Will you spell the name? *Light.*

Is it the name of a person? *Yes.*

Is it a message? *Yes.*

We presume your message is 'light, Mass, prayers,' etc. *Yes.*  
[Definite.]

Can you tell us the name of the person connected with the tragedy  
in this room? *Yes.*

Spell it. *Lunolowtmunal.*

Is the word complete yet? *No.*

Give us the next letters. *Yc.*

Is that still Jane? *Yes.*

Was the last message in English? *No.*

Was the last message in Latin? *No.*

Was the last message in French? *No.*

Was the last message in German? *Yes.*

How many words are there? [Table tipped four times.]

Are there four words? *Yes.*

Do you like the woman who married 'X'? *Yes.*

Do you still like her? [No reply.]

Will you spell her Christian name? *A.* [Then no reply.]

Are you tired? *Yes.*

Would you like us to stop? *Yes.*

Good night, and thank you.

## PLANCHETTE WRITING

Mr S. H. Glanville says:

We had, some years ago, obtained a Planchette, with a view to carrying out some experiments. These did not materialize, however, as the board persistently refused to move; and at none of the sittings did it write a single word. It was stored away and not used again until it was taken to Borley, where it at once became extremely active. It was there first used by A. J. Cuthbert and my son, Roger H. Glanville, who immediately obtained writings. Unfortunately, the first small sheet or two were lost. The first recorded writing begins with that shown under the date October 25, 1937.

## SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 25, 1937 (PLANCHETTE)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 25, 1937. It was held in the library (*i.e.*, Base Room). It began at 3.20 P.M. and ended at 4.20 P.M. Operators: A. J. Cuthbert and Roger Glanville.

Does the message begin 'near'? *Yes.*

Please write the second letter. [Indistinct.]

Is —— correct? *No.*

Is 'G' correct? [Indistinct.]

Will you please write the second word again? *Gr.*

Would you try to write the message again? [Indistinct.]

Is 'J' the first letter of the second word? [Indistinct.]

Is 'Y' the first letter of the second word? [Indistinct.]

Is it 'G'? *Yes.*

Is 'R' the second letter? *Yes.*

Is 'I' the third letter? *No.*

Is it 'E'? *Yes.*

Are there two 'E's'? *No.*

Is the next letter 'N'? *No.*

Is the fourth letter 'M'? *No.*

Is the fourth letter 'U'? *No.*

Would you write the fourth letter? *M* or *W*.

Is it 'W'? *Yes.*

Thank you. Is the next letter 'O'? *Yes.*

Is the next letter 'N'? *Yes.*

[The next operators were M. Kerr-Pearse and Roger Glanville.]

Is 'Grew on' right? *Yes.*  
 Would you write the next letter? [Indistinct.]  
 Is it an 'M'? *No.*  
 Is it an 'N'? *No.*  
 Is it an 'A'? *Yes.*  
 Is the next letter 'G'? *Yes.*  
 Is the next letter 'R'? *Yes.*  
 Is the next letter 'A'? *No.*  
 Is the next letter 'E'? *Yes.*  
 Is the next letter 'Y'? *Yes.*

[Being tired, the operators then stopped.]

SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 28, 1937 (PLANCHETTE)

Mr Glanville writes (folio 151) in the 'locked book':

The circumstances under which the following scripts were produced are as follows. Upon our return from the Rectory I showed my daughter Helen the scripts that had been produced there (October 25). She had not previously used a Planchette, and we had given her no detailed account regarding our own writing. During our absence, and *unknown to us*, she used (at Streatham) the Planchette with the results that follow. During the course of the writing there were many ordinary domestic interruptions, such as telephone calls, callers, etc., when the board was temporarily left.

Have you a message? *We.* [Indistinct.]  
 If the word is 'well,' say 'Yes.' *Yes.*  
 [No question asked.] *Marianne.*  
 Do you want us to look in the well—yes or no? *Yes.*  
 Is the well in the cellar? *Yes.*  
 Is there something you want us to find? *Yes.*  
 Can you tell us what it is? [Indistinct.]  
 Would you try again? Is it 'Ma'? [No reply.]  
 Is anything in the well to do with a child? *Yes.*  
 Was the child dead when it was born? [Indistinct.]  
 Do you mean 'yes' or 'no'? *Yes.*  
 Do you want us to find it? *Yes.*  
 Shall we find it in the well in the cellar? *Yes.*  
 Do you mean the well that has been filled in? *Yes.*  
 [No question asked.] *M.*  
 [No question asked.] *ariane.*  
 Is it some one using this name? [Indistinct.]  
 Could you tell me your own name? [Indistinct.]

Are you buried in the garden? *Yes.*

Can you tell us where? *Der re . . .* [Indistinct.]

Do you mean under the fir-tree? *No.*

Near a tree? *Yes.*

Is there anything to tell us where? *Stone.*

Can you tell me the rest of your name? *La . . .* [Remainder indistinct.]

Are the first two letters 'La'? *irre.*

Do you mean 'Lairre'? *Yes.*

Can we help? Are you unhappy? *Yes.*

Can we do anything to help you? *Mass.*

[No question asked.] *Prayers aness.*

The word is 'Mass,' isn't it? *Yes.*

Can you tell me, are you buried in the garden? *Yes.*

Do you want Mass said in the house [Rectory]? *Yes.*

In any special room? *No.*

Upstairs? [No reply.]

Do you mean it does not matter where? *Yes.*

Downstairs? [No reply.]

If you still want to talk, say 'Yes.' *Yes.*

Can you tell me the name of your nunnery? *Larire.*

Do you mean 'Lar'? *arre.*

Is it the name of your nunnery you are trying to write? *Yes.*

Was it near Bures? *Yes.*

Can you tell me how far away? Two miles or more? *Yes.*

Was it Bures? *Yes.*

Do you mean it was Bures? *Yes.*

It is your own name that you are trying to write, isn't it? *Yes.*

Can you tell me the name of the monk? [Indistinct.]

Is he unhappy? *Yes.*

Can you tell me when you passed over? *1667.*

The month? *May.*

The day? *17.*

Can you tell us *why* you passed over? *Yes.*

Did they hurt you? *Yes.*

Was there something you wanted very much before you passed over? *Water.*

Do you mean 'water'? *Yes.*

Can you try to spell the name of the nunnery? *h . . .* [Remainder indistinct.]

Is the first letter 'H'? *Yes.*

The next letter 'a'? *Yes.*

The next letter 'i'? *Yes.*

The next letter 'a'? *Yes.*

Could you do it again? *v.*  
 'Haiv.' Is that right? *Yes.*  
 Is it 'Haiv'? *Yes.*  
 Was it a closed order? *Yes.*  
 Do you want more questions? *Yes.*  
 Has it gone now? *Yes.*  
 Was the monk's Order of St Benedict? *Yes.*  
 Is the monk buried at Borley? *Yes.*  
 Do you know where? *Yes.*  
 In the garden, or under the house? [No reply.]

## SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 30, 1937 (PLANCHETTE)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on October 30, 1937,  
 Operators: The Rev. A. C. Henning and S. H. Glanville. It  
 ended at 11.50 P.M.

Who is there? *Jane.*  
 What date did you live? [Indistinct.]  
 Was your surname —? [No reply.]  
 How can we help you? *Im.*  
 Will you give us a message? [Indistinct.]  
 Was there a monastery here? *Yes.*  
 Was there a nunnery here? *Yes.*  
 What happened to you? *I died.*  
 How? *Murdered.*  
 Who by? *Henry.*  
 What is your name? *Mar. . . .*  
 What is your surname? *Lairre.*  
 Were you a nun? *Yes.*  
 Were you buried here? *Yes.*  
 Where? *In the garden.*  
 Do you mean garden? *Yes.*  
 What are you near? *Fir.*  
 Is it near the wall? *Yes.*  
 How can we help you? *Light, Mass . . .* [Then indistinct.]  
 Can the priest help? *Yes.*  
 Through Mass? *Yes.*  
 Where? [Indistinct.]  
 In Borley Church? [No reply.]  
 Shall we stop now? *Y . . .* [Then indistinct.]

## SÉANCE OF OCTOBER 31, 1937 (PLANCHETTE)

Report of sitting held at Streatham on October 31, 1937.

Operators: Miss Helen Glanville, M. Kerr-Pearse, S. H. Glanville, and Roger H. Glanville.

Who is there? [Indistinct, then] *Mary*.

What is your name? *Mary Lairre*.

How old were you when you passed over? 19.

Were you a novice? *Yes*.

Why did you pass over? [No reply.]

Are you at the end of the wall? *Yes*.

Where did you hear Mass? [Indistinct.]

Will you please spell each letter? *B-o-r-l-e-y*.

Did you know Father Enoch? [Indistinct.]

Will you repeat your last answer, letter by letter? *J-e-s-u-s*.

Have you a message? *Chant Light Mass*.

Do you want it for yourself? *Yes*.

Why? *I am unha . . .* [Three letters indistinct.]

Is it your own fault? *No*.

Whose fault? *Waldegrave*.

Were you murdered? *Yes*.

When? 1667.

How? *Stran . . .* [Last letters indistinct.]

Were you strangled? *Yes*.

Will *our* Mass be sufficient? *No*.

What Mass do you want? *Requiem*.

Must it be a Roman Catholic priest? [Indistinct.]

Will you spell answers letter by letter? *N-a-p-u-p-o*.

Are you French? *Yes*.

Where did you come from? *Havre*.

Is it ‘Havre’? *Yes*.

What was the name of your nunnery or convent? *Bure*.

Do you want burial as well as Mass? *Yes*.

Did Waldegrave take you from Bures? *Yes*.

Have you ever given us a message in Latin? *Yes*.

Are we speaking to Mary Lairre? *Yes*.

Can you tell us the Latin message again? *L-o-v-o*.

Was the first letter ‘L’? [No reply.]

Do you want water? *Yes*.

What kind of water? *Holy*.

What else do you want? *Incense*.

And what else? *W . . .* [Indistinctly.]

Will you please try again? [Indistinct.]

Will you please try once more? [Indistinct.]

Are you ever in Borley house? *Yes*.

Do you know ‘Jane’? *No*.

Do you know Caldebec? *No.*  
 Do you know any people called Bull? *Yes.*  
 Please spell their names. *Henry.*  
 Can we speak to —? *Yes.*  
 What does he say? [Indistinct.]  
 Please spell his name. [Indistinct.]  
 Mary, are you speaking for —? *No.*  
 Are you Mary Lairre? *Question me.*  
 Who are you? [A name was given.]  
 Are you happy? *No.*  
 Who caused you unhappiness? [Uncertain.]  
 Do you mean —? *Yes.*  
 Did you know Katie? *Yes.*  
 Please spell her surname. *Boreham.*  
 What year did she die? 1-8-8-9-0.  
 Please try again. 1888.  
 Can you tell us the month? *April.*  
 Have you written on the walls? *No.*  
 Who did? [A name was given.]  
 Do you know Mary, the nun? *Yes.*  
 Do you know Caldebec? *No.*  
 Do you know Jane? *No.*  
 Do you know —? *Yes.*  
 Where are you now? *Borley.*  
 Do you know about the Latin message? *Yes.*  
 Will you write the first word of the Latin message? [Indistinct.]  
 Can you spell each letter alone in English? [Indistinct.]  
 Do you mean you don't know what the message is? *Yes.*  
 Who is there? *Mari . . .* [Remainder uncertain.]  
 Do you like talking to us? *Yes.*  
 M. K-P.: Have you been to my house in Pont Street? *Yes.*  
 Do you like the people there? *No.*  
 Do you like me? *Yes.*  
 Will you come to see me in Geneva, as I like you? *Yes.*  
 Are you sure you like me? *Yes.*  
 R. H. G.: Can you see into the future? *No.*  
 S. H. G.: Will you move the pencil without our touching it? *Y . . .*

[The 'entity' then gave way to another.]

Which part of the Rectory do you like best? *Library.*  
 Did you send us a message in Latin? *Yes.*  
 Will you repeat it, so that we can understand? *Ad . . .* [Rest uncertain.]

Is 'ad' the first word? *Yes.*

The next word, please? [Indistinct.]

Is the message 'erel'? [No reply.]

Can you tell us in English? [No reply.]

Will you please repeat the whole message? [Indistinct.]

Did you give us a message, 'If chant light Mass'? *No.*

Do you know who did? [Indistinct.]

Do you wish to leave Borley? *Yes.*

Are your own past actions the cause of your being unable to leave?

*Yes.*

What was that action? *Death.*

Whose? [A name was given.]

What shall we do to help? [Indistinct.]

Please repeat: we do not understand. *In church.*

What do you want in church? *Light Mass Prayers.* [One word was indistinct.]

Please repeat the last word: we do not understand. *Incense.*

Please continue your message. [Indistinct.]

Please repeat carefully; we do not understand. *Get help.*

*Who* do you want to help you? *Glan . . .* [Rest uncertain.]

Will you repeat carefully, as we wish to help you? *Glanville.*

Which one? Spell name. *Sidney.*

S. H. G.: I am not able to hold a Mass. What can I do for you?

*Get. . .* [Remainder indistinct.]

I do not understand. Please try to tell me more clearly. *Get a priest.*

Can the Rev. A. C. Henning help you? *Yes.*

Did you write the messages on the walls at Borley? *Yes.*

Do you want the Mass on any special day, as we wish to help you?

*Yes.*

Which month? *June.*

Which day? *13.*

Is it still — speaking to us? *Yes.*

Can you tell us why you want the Mass on that day? [Indistinct.]

Please repeat very carefully. *My murder.*

Who was murdered? [Indistinct.]

Please repeat carefully, and name. [Indistinct.]

We cannot understand who was murdered. Please tell us if you can. *Gleleglin.*

Do you want us to stop? *To no.*

Please try to tell us the name of the person who died on the 13th of June. *Katie.*

Please tell us the surname. *Boreham.*

Are you quite sure the date, June 13, is the correct one? [No reply.]

Is there anyone else at Borley who wishes to speak to us? *Some.*

Who? *Jane*.

Can you tell us your full name? Please try. *Jane*. [Uncertain.]

What comes after 'Jane'? [Indistinct.]

Will you please try to tell us your name? [Indistinct.]

Were you called by another name? *Yes*.

What was it? *Caldebec*.

Who named you? [Indistinct.]

We do not understand; please try again. *Mother*.

Do you mean your mother? *Yes*.

[Referring to Caldebec] Is it in the Bible? *Yes*.

Do you know anything about the Latin message? [No reply.]

Is Marie Lairre there? Will she speak to us? *Yes*.

Do you know anything about the Latin message? *Yes*.

Can you spell the first word? [Indistinct.]

Can you write each letter alone? *Ad . . .* [Uncertain.]

#### SÉANCE OF NOVEMBER 20-21, 1937 (PLANCHETTE)

Report of sitting held at Borley Rectory on November 20-21, 1937. Operators: Dr H. F. Bellamy, Captain H. G. Harrison, S. H. Glanville, and R. H. Glanville.

Is anyone there? [No reply, but the Planchette suddenly tipped.]

Who is there? [Indistinct.]

Please try again. [No reply.]

Can we speak to —? [No reply.]

Is — there? *Yes*.

Please try again. [Indistinct.]

Is it —? *Yes*.

Will you tap, in order to reveal your presence, at ten o'clock on the door of the bedroom you used to use? *Yes*.

Who ordered that the window of dining-room should be bricked up? *Henry*.

Why? *Nun*.

Do you know of the finding of a skull in the library cupboard? *Yes*.

Whose skull was it? Do you know? [No reply.]

From whence did it come? *B . . .* [Indistinct.]

Will you write each letter separately? *B-u-r-e-s*. [This was written upside down and backward.]

Do you know that the windows here sometimes light up? *Yes*.

Can you tell us who does it? *Ma . . .*

Separate letters, please. *M-a-r-i-e L-a-*.

Do you mean Marie Lairre? *Yes*.

Is that the nun? *Yes*.

Will the windows light up to-night? *Yes*.

What time? 12.

Which window? *S-c-h-o-o-l-r-o-n-m.*

Shall we see the window alight? *Yes.*

Who is there? [A name was given.]

Is this room [library] a tragic one to you? [Indistinct.]

Will you please try again? *V.*

Was a woman the cause? *Yes.*

What was her name? *Katie . . .* [Indistinct.]

We do not understand; please repeat. [Indistinct.]

#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

I have now presented the reader with the full texts of all the table-tipping and Planchette records from the 'locked book.' Actually, many more scripts were produced, and, as I have remarked, rolls of wallpaper were used to record them. Mr Glanville thought it unnecessary to include them in his book. Some of them I have never seen myself, though I am reproducing extracts from the important ones in Chapter XIII.

As I warned the reader, I have had to omit many names, places, questions, and answers, as they refer to the alleged private lives of persons, living and dead. Perhaps a publisher, some day, will print an edition of this book, with the blanks filled in; perhaps in fifty years' time. But the reader of that period will be little nearer to the solution of the mystery than we are to-day. No information concerning the nun has been omitted.

These records (most of which are here published for the first time) must not be taken at their face value or too seriously. But they are an integral part of the Borley story and must be published. Some of the replies are ambiguous and contradictory, and one or two of the 'communicators' were actually living people. The reader must assess these séance records at his own valuation, and extract the few grains of fact from the mass of what looks very like chaff.

However, there is a thread of consistency running right through the records: all the 'entities' wanted 'Mass, light, prayers,' etc.; most of them were 'unhappy'; there is a suggestion of murder in many of the messages, which have a Roman Catholic flavour. I may say at once that all the sitters were

Anglicans, who were not consciously thinking of unnatural deaths, or of the 'nun,' who so often put in an appearance, so to speak. If readers can help us further to elucidate the messages, or can think of new interpretations, we shall be grateful for suggestions. I will now comment upon and clarify some of the references which appear in the records, particularly for the benefit of those readers who are unacquainted with the history of the hauntings.

#### REQUESTS IN 'LATIN'

*October 23, 1937.* This séance is remarkable for some alleged 'Latin' messages that were recorded. They appear to be nonsense, but perhaps some reader can interpret them. The suggestion is that a monk is trying to communicate.

#### INTRODUCING 'CALDIBEC'

*October 24, 1937.* 'Caldibec' (sometimes spelt 'Caldebec') first appears on the records at this séance. Claims to be both man and woman, with a pet name 'Janen.' Wants Mass, prayers, etc., in the kitchen. The name 'Katie' also appears. It was at a later portion of this séance that we were told where the nun was buried. The coat mentioned in the script is the 'strange coat' that appeared, disappeared, and reappeared so mysteriously during my tenancy of the Rectory.

*October 25, 1937.* An attempt to discover the origin of the wall-writings fails, though the 'entity' declared that it knew. The reference to the tobacco-tin is interesting. An empty tin was placed in the drawing-room and a chalk ring was drawn round it, as a control, in case it should be paranormally moved. As a matter of fact, it *was* moved: it was found on the landing outside the Blue Room. Hence the question.

At a later portion of the séance 'Fadenoch' is mentioned, and 'Caldibec' returns. Fadenoch, or perhaps Father Enoch, was stated to be a monk, buried in the Rectory garden. 'Katie' appears again in the record. Katie's full name is revealed in the Planchette scripts, and Fadenoch again communicates. It was a strange remark, strangely anticipatory of events to come, that Mr Glanville made when he said, 'Should the house be de-

stroyed?' The 'entity' said 'No,' but it was admitted at another séance that they cannot foresee, foretell, or foreknow the future.

*October 25, 1937.* On this day began the first Planchette sittings, with poor results. Little information was obtained. The words 'Grew on' and 'Grey' were recorded.

#### 'MARY LAIRRE' SAYS 'SEARCH THE WELL'

*October 28, 1937.* This séance was one of the most important that the Glanville family held. Helen, alone, obtained some remarkable information. For some reason that I cannot now fathom, I omitted to insert in my previous monograph, when recording this séance, a piece of most important information. This is that the nun, 'Lairre' (who, for the first time, is mentioned in this script), tells us to 'look in the well.' Not only 'the well,' but 'the well in the cellar.' And not only the well in the cellar, but the well 'that had been filled in.' There were two wells in the cellar, one partly filled in, the other completely blocked up. It was in the latter, six years later, that we found some remains, pendants, etc. But we obtained our 'clue' from an entirely different source, as the reader will learn. Not only did I omit to put this vital information in my last book, but I had completely forgotten all about it. This is not so extraordinary when one considers that the 'locked book' had been reposing, untouched, in the vaults of the University of London for five years, and that I had not seen it during this period. It is true that the nun said that a child was buried in the filled-in well, but these séance messages are full of contradictions, and 90 per cent. of the information is confusing. Even 'Marie Lairre' herself was not sure *where* she was buried. However, she was apparently quite definite as to the exact date on which she died.

When Miss Glanville asked where the nun was buried one of the replies, as recorded in the script, was *Der re.* It has been suggested that the attempted word is *derrière* = 'behind.' We know from the script of the séance held on October 31, 1937, that 'Mary Lairre' said she was French. Is it not possible that she was trying to convey that her remains would be found *behind* something? What remains *were* discovered were found at the foot

of, or 'behind,' a wall. Support for *Der re* being an attempt at a French word is to be found in Canon Phythian-Adams's interpretation of certain wall-writings, in which other French words were discovered.

#### MARY LAIRRE WAS MURDERED

*October 30, 1937.* Miss Glanville, at Streatham, was told that the 'nun' was 'hurt' when she passed over and that the last thing she wanted in life was 'water.' Two days later, at Borley, with the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr Glanville as operators, Mary Lairre immediately communicated, revealing that her name was 'Mar' (obviously an attempt to write 'Mary') and that she was 'murdered' by some one named 'Henry.' She declares that she was a nun.

*October 31, 1937.* The next day, at Streatham, with Miss Helen Glanville and three other sitters, the 'entity' boldly signs herself 'Mary Lairre' and suggests she was strangled by a Waldegrave (Henry Waldegrave?). She confirms that she died, a novice, in 1667, and that she was then aged nineteen. Her remains could be found, she said, at the 'end of a wall.' She also declares that she was French, and that she came from Havre. So, bit by bit, the story of the nun is being gradually built up.

#### KATIE BOREHAM

At this same séance the name 'Katie Borcham' emerges. We have heard of Katie before, but the script reveals her surname, and that she died in 1889, afterwards corrected to 1888, in April. Immediate steps were taken to consult the registers of Borley Church, and under 'Deaths' is the following entry: 'Kate Boreham of Sudbury died Easter Day, 1888, aged 31.' Kate Boreham of Sudbury may have no connexion with the 'Katie Boreham' who was alleged to have communicated at both Borley and Streatham; but if not, it is a most extraordinary coincidence. Even the year of her death was given, and 'April' and 'Easter Day' are sufficiently close to be remarkable.<sup>1</sup> Of course, some 'entity' might have impersonated 'Katie'—but there is the information, wherever it came from, and whoever recorded it. The church registers

<sup>1</sup> Easter Sunday fell on April 2 in 1888.

also revealed the fact that a 'Kate Reeve of Borley died on March 5, 1871, aged six months.' But this infant can have no connexion whatever with the name mentioned in the scripts.

The question asked by Mr Mark Kerr-Pearse, as to whether the communicating entity would visit him at Geneva, refers to the fact that he was about to take up a consular appointment in that city.

Towards the end of the séance 'Katie Boreham' is mentioned again, and we are told that she died, not in April, as previously recorded, but on 'June 13.' As the Sudbury Kate Boreham died on 'Easter Day,' she could not have expired on 'June 13' too. So perhaps there is *no* connexion between the two Katies. It is all very confusing!

#### MIRROR-WRITING

*November 20-21, 1937.* This is the last séance recorded in full in the 'locked book'; but, as I have stated, the Glanville family have many rolls of Planchette scripts, which I have never seen. But I presume that Mr Glanville transcribed the best of them into his book.

The interesting point about this séance is the fact that it is confirmed that the window of the dining-room was bricked up on account of the nun. The communicator also apparently knows whose skull it was that was found in the library cupboard—but refuses to divulge the name. 'Mary Lairre' then signs herself 'Marie' (which was unusual) and states that the schoolroom window would 'light up at midnight.' If it did, no one saw it.

Actually, two Planchette boards were used, successively, at this séance, as Dr Bellamy brought his own. It made no difference, apparently. A strange feature of this sitting was that some of the answers were in 'mirror-writing'—that is, they were written *backward*: not at all an easy way to write, whether one is a Planchette 'entity' or merely a human being.

One last warning. Do not take these scripts—or rather the information—too seriously. There are 'lying spirits,' I presume, just as there are lying humans. But some of the information is interesting, even remarkable.

CHAPTER IX  
THE CAMBRIDGE COMMISSION  
By ANDREW J. B. ROBERTSON

[*Mr Andrew J. B. Robertson, M.A., of St John's College, Cambridge, holds an honours degree in chemistry, and has specialized in physical chemistry. He has been interested in psychical research for many years. After reading my 'Most Haunted House in England' he formed a Commission at Cambridge to investigate the alleged hauntings. The inquiry lasted from the time of the fire in 1939 to the demolition of the Rectory in 1944. Mr Robertson has compiled the following summary of results from his own observations, and from the many reports sent to him by his colleagues. I also received these reports as they were prepared.—H. P.]*

PREFACE

THE observations upon which the present report is based have been made for the most part by my numerous friends and colleagues at various times during the last few years, and it is a great pleasure to express my thanks to all those who have participated in the investigations. The practical work involved in these studies is distinctly tedious, and in addition to carrying on most of this, my colleagues have further helped by much discussion which for me, at least, has been most fruitful.

INTRODUCTION

The Borley Rectory case is already famous. A considerable volume of evidence has been presented to substantiate the hypothesis that the building and the surrounding grounds are subject to those phenomena usually described as 'haunting.' This material has been collected in a book by Harry Price entitled *The Most Haunted House in England: Ten Years' Investigation of Borley Rectory*. The period dealt with in this book extends from 1863, when the Rectory was built, to 1939, when the building

was partially destroyed by a fire on February 27. The evidence for the haunting during this period falls into several parts. First, there is certain matter which one might call historical, collected by Harry Price, from which it would appear that disturbances were noted at the Rectory in the last century. Then there are investigations by Harry Price himself and his colleagues, although, as he points out, it is not entirely clear that some of the supposed phenomena they observed were not produced by normal means. There is also a detailed diary of phenomena of a ghostly nature kept during the period when the Rectory was inhabited by the Reverend and Mrs Foyster: a number of the events reported in this are certainly unusual, even in cases of haunting. Later, there are the reports presented by a body of observers recruited by Harry Price; the conditions at this stage of the investigation were more satisfactory, and the great majority of these observers reported some phenomena which they thought to be of a psychic nature. After this the Rectory was purchased by Captain W. H. Gregson, who also experienced a number of curious happenings. Finally, there are various accounts of apparently ghostly phenomena which have been noted by people, other than those dealt with in this report, which also refer to the period after the fire in February of 1939. The phenomena reported by all these observers vary somewhat from time to time, but attention might be directed to some of those which have been observed which are of more special interest, in that they have a bearing on the material in the present report. As with other cases of haunting, the most common phenomena were auditory, consisting of noises such as knockings, footsteps, rumblings, bangings, and even the sound of horses' hooves passing down the road outside the Rectory. Visual phenomena are less frequent: a spectral nun has, however, been reported at various times, and also various shapes and lights. In general, it appears that visible spectral figures proceed silently, whereas footsteps are not accompanied by any visible effects. At various times true Poltergeist effects have been observed, including the throwing of objects and the disappearance and reappearance of various articles. An unusual phenomenon which many persons have witnessed to is the

appearance on the walls of vague markings in pencil, and in some cases short messages, although these latter have not appeared under good conditions, as some of the markings have. Effects on two dogs have been reported by Captain Gregson; the reason for these is obscure. Finally, reference must be made to the so-called 'cold spot,' which is simply a part of the Rectory on the first floor at which various people have at several times suddenly become rather cold.

Events such as those mentioned above are not, of course, possible in Faraday's sense of the naturally possible and impossible: that is to say, according to one's normal concepts these events should not take place. It is, however, rash to assume that an alleged fact cannot be true because it is in disagreement with theoretical considerations. It therefore seemed to a number of us at Cambridge that it would be of interest to investigate the remains of the Rectory for ourselves, and we were even optimistically hoping that it might be possible to try and throw some light on the mechanism of supposed supernatural happenings. These hopes have not been realized, and after several years our contribution seems small; but it is perhaps not without interest to other students of the subject. During the present investigation a considerable number of people (fifty-eight at the time of writing) have been to the remains of Borley Rectory on twenty-five separate nights. Nearly all these investigators were university undergraduates.<sup>1</sup> In nearly all cases their approach to the subject was one of considerable scepticism. Many of these observers have reported various events which did not appear to them to be obviously explicable in normal terms. In the following section an account is given of the observations in chronological order, all those events of possible paranormal significance being mentioned together with any comments on them made by the investigators. Most of the reports, which were written on the results of the visits to the Rectory, utilized the terminology of the hypothesis of ghosts as a matter of convenience, but this does not necessarily imply that the investigators considered ghosts to be the explanation of their experiences.

<sup>1</sup> Most of these have now graduated: see Appendix I.—H.P.

## ACCOUNTS OF EXPERIENCES AT BORLEY RECTORY

*Visit 1.*—The first visit to the Rectory in the present series was made by A. J. B. Robertson with two friends during the Easter vacation of 1939; that is, fairly shortly after the 1939 fire. Nothing whatsoever out of the ordinary was noticed. It was found that although the building had been rather seriously damaged by the fire, it was possible to get into all the rooms on both floors and into the cellars. But it was *not* possible to move about the Rectory without making appreciable noise, since the floor was freely strewn with bricks, pieces of broken glass, plaster, and other material.

## A LUMINOUS PATCH AND FOOTSTEPS

*Visit 2.*—Some time elapsed before the next visit to the ruins, on the night of October 31, 1941, by A. J. B. Robertson and I. P. Williams. The gardens and ruins were carefully examined, and seemed deserted. During the night several things were noted which seemed worth recording. From 11.55 P.M. to 12.5 A.M., 12.30 A.M. to 12.35 A.M., and from 12.55 A.M. to 1.10 A.M. (summer-time), readings of temperatures were taken with a mercury-in-glass thermometer. During these periods the observers were sitting on some stairs next to the pantry of the Rectory. The readings are shown in Table I<sup>1</sup>:

In mentioning these results the observers make the cautious comment that:

The results are shown on the graphs, but as the upper end of the thermometer was held in a gloved hand, and in general we must confess to lack of precautions, these results are not regarded as of evidential value. They are, however, regarded as interesting because separate experiments showed it was quite difficult to produce fluctuations of this magnitude by blowing on the thermometer, etc. The cooling effect at 12.30 is probably due to the fact that the thermometer was removed from its cylinder just before the readings were started, whereas in the other cases it was kept out for about five minutes before the readings were taken.

<sup>1</sup> The *exact* values of these times may be inaccurate, as it was afterwards found that the watch was not very reliable.

The original report then continues to describe another rather curious observation, stating, 'At about 12.45 A.M. one of us (A. R.) observed a luminous patch appearing on the wall between sewing-room and corridor, containing the stairs we were sitting on.' This patch was therefore only a few feet from the

TABLE I

<i>Time</i>	<i>Temp.</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Temp.</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Temp.</i>
P.M.	°F.	A.M.	°F.	A.M.	°F.
11.55	41.8	12.30	47.4	1.00	42.0
11.56	44.0	12.31	44.0	1.01	42.8
11.57	46.0	12.32	43.0	1.02	43.4
11.58	47.5	12.33	41.5	1.03	42.2
11.59	46.6	12.34	41.5	1.04	41.8
12.00	47.0	12.35	41.5	1.05	41.8
A.M.		12.55	41.2	1.06	42.4
12.01	47.0	12.56	41.2	1.07	42.4
12.02	46.4	12.57	41.0	1.08	42.4
12.03	45.0	12.58	41.2	1.09	42.3
12.04	43.5	12.59	41.4	1.10	42.3
12.05	46.0				

observer. The report continues, 'This was about a foot square, and lasted a second or so, and could not have been due to the moon. Its centre was about a foot from the floor. We do not consider that great weight should be attached to this observation.' The report continues to describe some noises as of footsteps which were heard after the investigators had again looked round the house, and had been sitting in the sewing-room for some time (this is a room on the ground floor of the Rectory next to the kitchen). (See Plan II.) The account states:

We had been sitting there in complete silence for some time (ten to fifteen minutes), when at about 2.10 A.M. we heard three or four very distinct and heavy footsteps, as though a person was descending the pantry stairs. We feel no doubt about this observation. After about a minute we approached as silently as possible. One of us (A. R.) on looking at the stairs observed a distinct movement among the shadows, some dark outline moving from a position partially in



PLATE VII. BORLEY RECTORY AFTER THE FIRE

Photographed March 28, 1939.

[See p. 232]

PLATE VIII. BORLEY RECTORY, SHOWING FURTHER DAMAGE BY GALES

Photographed August 17, 1943.

[See p. 233]





the moonlight, into complete darkness, rather quickly. On illuminating the shadows with a dim red light used throughout, nothing could be seen. This shape was not seen by the other observer, therefore we cannot definitely affirm its appearance. We then addressed the house in general in a loudish whisper, asking any entities to make one knock for 'Yes' and two for 'No,' and on asking if any discarnate entities were present, one of us (I. W.) heard a knock. But on repeating the question, nothing happened. We inspected the house again, and everything seemed normal.

The report also remarks that the dark outline was found by experiment not to be a shadow of either investigator. The fact that the two possible visual appearances (luminous patch and dark shape) were not collectively perceived is not of significance, since the observer who did *not* notice them was not in a position to do so. It is, however, probably not difficult to be mistaken with such fleeting impressions, especially when observed in a supposedly haunted ruin. In conclusion, the original report states the opinion of the investigators as 'that at least one phenomenon occurred, *i.e.*, footsteps, as we do not consider these could have been produced by normal means: and that possibly some other phenomena also occurred.'

#### EIGHTEEN KNOCKS

*Visit 3.*—The Rectory was visited by E. N. J. Angelbeck and A. J. B. Robertson on the night of December 20, 1941. The temperature readings were repeated, but this time the fluctuations were not observed. One interesting thing happened during the night, this being the occurrence of eighteen knocks. This is described in the original report, which says:

We then moved to the hall and addressed the entities, calling on Harry Bull by name. We asked them to make one knock for 'Yes,' two for 'No,' and three for 'I don't know,' and we then moved to the drawing-room and knocked with an electric torch on the wall in a regular way: unfortunately, we forgot the precise way. About five minutes later we were inspecting some writing in the drawing-room and deciding it was probably written by visitors, when we both heard very distinct knocking, of a very regular kind. It consisted of a double knock repeated three times; then a short pause of a few seconds, when the double knock was again repeated three

times; then after another pause this occurred again exactly as before. This knocking did not seem to be localized at any particular point, but rather seemed to come from just outside the drawing-room. It sounded as though it might have been a person operating a small hand-pump for water, but it seemed rather a peculiar time for this (12.35 A.M.). This auditory phenomenon would seem to be directed by some intelligence, but the investigators could not find any person who might have produced the effect. Later attempts to produce further knockings were without success. The investigators concluded that there was a possibility of phenomena of a psychic nature having occurred.

#### KNOCKS, RUMBLINGS, AND FOOTSTEPS

*Visit 4.*—J. P. Grantham and A. J. B. Robertson spent the night of February 27, 1942, at Borley. This date is the third anniversary of the fire. The experiment in knocking was repeated early in the night, the original report stating:

At 11 P.M. we produced knocks in a regular fashion on a door in the sewing-room; we gave three regular knocks, repeated after an interval, and then repeated again. At 11.6 a noise as of a click came from outside the sewing-room. As one single noise of short duration is of no evidential value, we pointed out to the entities (in a quiet voice) the necessity of making three knocks if possible. At 11.10, while we were still in the sewing-room, we heard three heavy regular knocks from the front door: these we consider to be of probably paranormal origin.

The report then proceeds to describe a visual effect, stating:

At 11.18 one of us (J. P. G.) saw a luminosity appear on the wall of the sewing-room near the fire when the other observer was looking out of the window: he described it as though produced by the rapid shining of a torch on the wall. This should be compared with a similar impression received on October 31, 1941 (by A. R.), and it should further be noted that J. P. G. had *not* been informed of this.

The original report then describes the placing of circular counters about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter, each on a chalk cross in the rooms and corridors, all over the house. The object of this was to see whether any displacement of the objects would occur. Actually nothing was moved. Pieces of paper were placed on

most of the corridor walls and in most of the rooms, a pencil being conveniently placed near each paper. Some of the papers were labelled with remarks such as, 'Please write here,' this experiment seeming of interest in view of previous claims concerning the appearance of pencil-writing on the walls. Three small bells were placed at various points on the ground floor, the investigators thinking that an active Poltergeist might be able to ring them. However, they remained undisturbed. During these various operations the observers were in the sewing-room at one time when a rumbling noise was heard. They say: 'During this, at 11.31, we were in the sewing-room and heard a strange rumbling noise from upstairs as of heavy furniture being moved; this was repeated at 11.34, but fainter. The duration was in each case several seconds. We estimate this to be abnormal.' Some further inconclusive noises were reported later, consisting of one knock in the sewing-room of a definite kind, a rustling in the garden, and a noise as of a door being closed, but no significance was attached to these. During the whole time a thermometer, with a specially protected bulb, was carried around and read at frequent intervals: the fluctuations of temperature were only a small fraction of a degree. The bulb of the thermometer was protected by enclosure in a test-tube which was again enclosed in a wider tube. The temperature was about 0° C. the whole time.

The report goes on to say:

At 2.57 we had collected all the papers and all the other items. At this stage there was nothing unusual to report. We were just saying that perhaps the entities had been frightened away, when we heard three regular and distinct noises, reminding us of foot-steps. We disagree as to their estimated position, one (J. P. G.) saying they were just outside the sewing-room in which we were in; whereas the other observer thought they were several rooms away. This is the only observation about which we are not in agreement.

The next day, on inspecting the pieces of paper, we observed slight marks in indelible pencil on two of the pieces, and more especially on one. The marks appear to be meaningless, and have plainly been made when the paper was folded. Now, the paper

containing the most marks was the one we had pinned up in the downstairs drawing-room. Further, we had inspected it extra carefully when taking it down because it was close to some writing on the wall made since the fire (we estimated), on a white patch left by the peeling off of some wallpaper. There were no marks on it at this stage. Incidentally, we might say the writing on the wall was probably put there by some visitor: there are numerous complicated drawings and writings all over the Rectory of skulls, etc., but this writing interested us more owing to its simplicity. The main point is our careful inspection of the paper. The papers were carried into the sewing-room and placed in an envelope; this piece we are considering was the last to be collected and was therefore presumably outside. Now we had only one indelible pencil, which we had placed upstairs by the chapel, and this was one of the first to be collected. It was placed with the others in a pocket entirely separate from the papers. It is therefore our own opinion that the markings are abnormal to some degree of probability, but as it is not inconceivable that we made the markings by accident, we should like this to be considered only as an opinion. We should not like to put forward the markings as a definite piece of evidence. We hope to be able to repeat this under conditions of such exactitude that a really decisive statement can be made. Unfortunately, after collecting all the papers we considered the experiment at an end.

We therefore conclude that the three knocks, the rumblings, and the footsteps were phenomena. As possible phenomena we have several noises of a non-recurrent kind, and a luminosity. As a probable phenomenon, we have the strange markings on two pieces of paper.

#### KNOCKS AND THEIR PROBABILITY

Even at this early stage of the investigation it was becoming apparent that the curious events noticed at Borley Rectory were in the main of an auditory nature. This is unsatisfactory, since these happenings are just those most likely to occur by quite normal means. The original report on this visit points out that the repeated noises of the same kind are of much greater significance than single noises. In fact, it is hardly justifiable to attach significance to most single noises of short duration. In the Rectory, however, one is faced with a regular reiteration of the same noise, such as footsteps or knocks. It is therefore highly

improbable that each separate noise is an independent event. Thus on February 27, 1942, the observers heard eight definite noises in four hours, of which three were regular knocks, three were regular footsteps, and two were single knocks. The probability of such a distribution arising from independent events is extremely small. Let us, for example, consider one knock to occur at the beginning of a four-hour period. Then if the other seven knocks have not occurred it is possible for them to occur any time within the next four hours, or 14,400 seconds, from the first knock. The chance of any one of the remaining knocks to occur within the next second of the first knock is therefore only one in 14,400. Since there are seven remaining knocks, it follows that the probability of a double knock spaced over a second is  $7/14,400$ . In the case of a triple knock, the probability is much smaller. Thus, if the double knock has occurred, then the probability of another knock within the next second is  $6/14,400$ , giving the probability of a triple knock as  $7 \times 6/14,400^2$ , which is of the order  $10^{-7}$ . These arguments cannot, of course, be applied to effects which form a sequence originating from one cause—that is, a chain of dependent events. Such might arise, for example, from a stone rolling down the stairs, when regular knocks would be noticed. In investigating a subject where there is great doubt, such as that of haunting, one must carefully record all curious phenomena, even though the events may be due to natural causes. In any given case a decision is difficult; it is therefore of importance to consider the sum total of all possible phenomena. This will be done later when further facts have been presented.

#### THE NUN 'ANNIVERSARY'

*Visit 5.*—Most cases of haunting have by tradition some particular night of the year when the effects are invariably noticed. In the Borley case this date is said to be July 28, when the figure of the spectral nun is supposed to appear. The Rectory was visited on July 28, 1942, by J. B. Armstrong, A. J. B. Robertson, M. E. E. White, and I. P. Williams. Nothing of interest was noticed at all.

## THE STRANGE STORY OF A CLOCK

*Visit 6.*—J. C. Brown, R. A. Brown, and J. E. Lankester visited the Rectory on the night of September 22, 1942. They examined the ground floor of the building, but found that they could not get upstairs since a door leading from the kitchen passage to the kitchen had been nailed up. The investigators, after their exploration, established themselves in the sewing-room. At about 11 P.M. several sharp cracks were heard. At about 11.30 sounds of movement were heard in the room above that in which the investigators were sitting. They stopped talking and listened. Measured and steady footsteps sounded across the ceiling, of a distinctly heavy kind. They crossed the room, and were followed by bumps and sounds as though something were being dragged across the floor. This was followed by silence for a few minutes, after which the footsteps started again and lasted for several minutes. The noises ceased suddenly. There was a slight renewal of the sounds at dawn. It would be extraordinarily difficult to move about in this room from which the noises came with a measured tread. However, it is unfortunate that there is no proof that the noises were not produced by a living person.

Another interesting thing was reported by these observers. One of them (J. E. L.) heard throughout the night the ticking of a clock, but this was heard only occasionally by the other observers. His mother (in Ipswich) woke up during the night at about midnight and was puzzled by the sound of a clock. There was no clock in the room and none in the house that could be heard there. She wondered if her son was being disturbed by the same thing. Finally the investigators heard, just before leaving at dawn, two sharp cracks from the dining-room. They thought it probable, on reviewing the night, that the footsteps could be considered to be a psychic phenomenon.

*Visit 7.*—E. N. J. Angelbeck and A. J. B. Robertson visited the Rectory on December 22, 1942, staying for the whole night. Nothing of interest was experienced.

*Visit 8.*—W. McC. Aitken and O. B. Howl visited the Rectory

on the night of January 19, 1943: again there was nothing of interest to report.

#### THE 'HORSES' HOOFs' AGAIN

Visit 9.—On March 21, 1943, the Rectory was visited by a rather larger party than usual, consisting of G. J. Bell, G. H. Booth, B. A. Holden, F. S. Marshall, J. F. Millard, A. J. B. Robertson, and J. H. Waton. While two of the party (J. F. M. and A. R.) were making a preliminary reconnaissance which revealed the building to be deserted, the five remaining observers, who were situated in the garden, heard on two occasions a noise which they all agreed sounded like a horse stamping upon the ground. This seemed to originate from the road just outside the summer-house. Since it was obvious that no horse was there, the observers thought it probable that the noise could be classified as a possible phenomenon. None of these five observers knew the story of the coach and horses. The only other noises of interest were at 10.38 P.M., sounds as of a heavy person moving about in the garden near the pond, immediate investigation revealing nothing; and at 12.38 A.M. a noise as of a person shuffling about in the kitchen was heard by the two observers nearest this part (J. F. M. and A. R.). The party was in a rather spread-out single file, and these two members, who were leading, had just arrived at the top of the stairs leading down to the kitchen. Immediate investigation with a red light revealed nothing. An experiment of a kind with a magical formula is also perhaps worth mention. It would appear from the literature of the subject that Poltergeist manifestations are affected by prayers in some cases. It therefore seemed worth trying a formula from 'black magic' to see if this would have any effect. A formula given by Grillot de Givry at p. 109 of his book *Witchcraft, Magic, and Alchemy* (London, 1931)<sup>1</sup> was read out by several persons. This formula is stated to have been used by the sorcerer Salatin for conjuring the Devil, using terms not belonging to any known language. Its result at the Rectory was, however, nothing, even though an attempt was made to reinforce the effect by exhibiting at the same time a

<sup>1</sup> The English translation of *Le Musée des sorciers, mages et alchimistes* (Paris, 1929).—H.P.

pentacle for conjuring infernal spirits, taken from page 110 of de Givry's book. However, the experiment seemed worth while in view of the extreme lack of knowledge of this subject. No temperature fluctuations of significance were noted; no response to knockings or insults was obtained; no papers were marked; and certain experiments to show the transport of matter through matter failed, as always.

In considering the results the investigators thought it remarkable that the horse noises in the road corresponded closely to previous accounts, both in the nature of the noise and the position from which it apparently originated: this phenomenon was only a fragmentary version of the original one. This, they remark, seems a rather general feature of the effects noted by the people from Cambridge.

#### TAPS, BANGS, AND FOOTSTEPS

*Visit 10.*—*Borley was visited by W. W. Cook, R. M. Hay, and P. Wadsworth on the night of April 30, 1943.* After a complete search of the house the observers established themselves in the passage outside the sewing-room. The door from this passage to the kitchen was nailed up so that they could not go quickly upstairs to investigate noises: to go upstairs they had to climb in via the boiler-house roof into Bedroom 11. (These room numbers refer to the plans in Harry Price's book.) Their report remarks that at 10.35 'we challenged the spiritual world, giving way to a long burst of scepticism.' Then at 10.45:

Five distinct footsteps were heard, appearing to come from the vicinity of the top of the back stairs, either in Bedroom 1 or 2. We all agreed that no normal explanation was forthcoming, though we made no attempt to investigate, owing to the difficulties of quick access, and possibly for less worthy reasons as well. Challenging was indulged in considerably throughout the night, but as at no time, save one or two exceptions, did any reply materialize sooner than five or ten minutes after each challenge—usually from five to ten minutes after—we did not record the times. Our challenges took the form of requesting that if 'anyone' were there would 'he' make himself known by tapping or some similar sign, giving an example each time by tapping on the kitchen door.

Thuds in threes were recorded from time to time, sometimes so faint that we were doubtful whether there were one, two, or three thuds. They all appeared to come from the bathroom or Bedrooms 2 or 3. Three times rumbling, resembling that made by a heavy piece of furniture on casters being moved over the floor, lasting about a second or more each time, was recorded.

11.31: A scraping noise as of a heavy packing-case being dragged a foot or two over a gritty floor was observed. It appeared to come from the bathroom.

12.17: Four taps, as of a light wooden mallet striking a board, were observed. They appeared to come from Bedrooms 4 or 5.

From about 2.30 the wind started to rise. This made any reliable recording of phenomena difficult. The sewing-room door and the doors of Bedrooms 4 and 5 started to bang regularly.

1.30: A loud bang, either from the larder door or the scullery door, was noted. At that time there was a definite lull in the wind. A request was immediately made to 'do it again.' Immediately there was a sound as of a brick being dropped from a height into the courtyard just outside the kitchen passage.

After this the wind again rose and no further phenomena were noted. They finally remark on the fact that next day, on inspecting some sheets of paper they had taken to the Rectory in a case, a pencil mark was noticed on the sheet facing the bottom of the case. This they say cannot, obviously, be recorded as anything abnormal, since there is no definite proof that the mark was absent before the visit to the Rectory. All the other sheets were without a mark, as was to be expected since the pile of paper from which they were taken had not been disturbed since purchasing. The whole pile was scrutinized without finding any marks. There were no pencils or bits of pencil lead in the case.

#### THERMAL VARIATIONS

*Visit 11.*—Borley was visited on the night of June 8, 1943, by G. J. Bell, G. H. Booth, B. A. Holden, E. B. Hall, F. S. Marshall, and P. L. Owen. Their report says: 'The only point of interest lies in the nature of the temperature variations. A steady fall in temperature was in each case arrested over the hour and then resumed. We leave the interpretation of these results to more competent or more imaginative authorities.' This point is

illustrated by about seventy readings taken with a mercury thermometer, at the foot of the stairs from 11.50 P.M. to 12.06 A.M.; at the 'cold spot' from 12.50 A.M. to 1.06 A.M.; and again at the foot of the stairs from 1.50 A.M. to 2.07 A.M.

#### STRANGE NOISES

*Visit 12.*—I. R. Gordon and J. R. Palmer visited the Rectory on the night of June 9, 1943. They reported a number of curious experiences, these again being in the main of an auditory nature. After describing an inspection of the building and the leaving of twenty-eight objects in carefully marked positions at various points they remark on a scratching sound heard at 11.28 while they were eating in the sewing-room, this noise coming from the passage outside. Their report proceeds:

11.35 P.M.—11.50 P.M.: Stood by Nun's Walk without making any observations. We spoke to 'Harry Bull,' the approach being sympathetic rather than insolent.

11.50 P.M.: Went upstairs. 12.7 A.M.: While in Blue Room, I.R.G. thought he observed a whitish object cross the lawn and disappear into the trees near the boundary-stone: the rapidly fading light may account for this. The weather was relatively warm, with young moon and slight ground haze. It was never completely dark. Although conditions were thus generally good, animal noises were abundant and distracting. There was no wind.

12.16 A.M.: The sounds of some one walking in the courtyard were heard, which may have been due to inhabitants of the cottage.

11.50 P.M.—12.34 A.M.: During this period we were engaged in taking temperature readings at the 'cold spot' and in the Blue Room.

The readings obtained appear those one would expect from normal conditions, but it is perhaps worth noting one rather sudden temperature drop—from 61° to 58° in four minutes—observed in the Blue Room with an unshielded thermometer. No special magnetic effects were noted at the 'cold spot' with a compass. The observers after this proceeded to the sewing-room, and report:

12.50 A.M.—1.50 A.M.: While on watch near the sewing-room window many noises were heard, resembling at times the padding

of feet on rubble in the passages upstairs and down, on the cellar steps, and on sticks, etc., outside the window. The noises were heard in bouts of anything up to a minute, with intervals of ten to twenty minutes of complete silence. Most of the noises in the passage were accompanied by single squeaks which would support the theory that they were due to nesting birds, but since no nests were found in these places in spite of the general activity of birds in the building, we thought this unlikely. A possible explanation of the squeaks would be the movement of the bell-springs, most of which were bell-less.

1.50 A.M.—2.5 A.M.: Stood on the lawn. No observations. 2.5—2.20: Inspected top floor, looking especially for birds' nests. Spent five minutes standing in the passage outside Room 11. Noises as of a human knee cracking were heard in Room 11 and in the Blue Room, but nothing amiss was observed. The thermometers were checked.

2.20 A.M.—4.35 A.M.: On watch in the sewing-room. Noises resumed with increasing frequency and loudness. They could at times be heard above our whispered conversation. 3.25 A.M.: What sounded like a small piece of plaster fell to the ground somewhere in the house—louder, it is thought, than if it had merely fallen from a ceiling, or wall. 3.45 A.M.: Noises reached a climax, the sewing-room appeared to creak in sympathy; for over a minute there was a sound as of some one travelling round the room flicking the walls with a duster. Other noises noted included the sound of small stones being thrown against the wall, and footsteps on broken glass in the passage outside Rooms 7 and 10. Also the sound of a tin being kicked.

The investigators then collected up their controlled objects, pieces of paper, sealed glass tubes, and noted that thread they had used to seal Rooms 9 and 10 remained unbroken. On visiting the churchyard opposite they noticed that Harry Bull had died in the Rectory on June 9, 1927, according to the date on his tombstone. They comment:

I. R. G. noticed that whenever Harry Bull was invoked noises were observed shortly after. It should be noted that there was considerable activity on the part of birds and frogs, but frequently noises were heard which were unaccountable. As the Rectory is normally absolutely silent and as the noises were so regular, special significance is attached to the observations. No sounds were ever heard while we were moving about.

*Visit 13.*—The Rectory was visited by Miss J. Camock, J. V. Owen, and I. R. Gordon on the night of June 16, 1943. They had nothing of interest to report.

#### 'COLD SPOT' ELEVEN DEGREES COLDER

*Visit 14.*—A. Heap and I. S. Longmuir passed the night of June 19, 1943, in the Rectory. Their report states:

At 11.15 P.M. we were both in the sewing-room and heard twice the sound of rubble falling in the cellar. I. S. L. detected the sound of glass.

At 01.00 A.M. we went upstairs to take temperature readings at the 'cold spot,' making Room 11 our base. At 01.17 A.M. we saw a white shape at the base of the tree near the glasshouses. The shape was roughly as indicated. It was about six feet high. I. S. L. shone his torch, and nothing was seen, but the white shape was still there when he switched off his torch. The white shape could not be due to the moonlight, as the moon was down behind the trees in the background. We put it down to the bark of the tree fluorescing. On returning from taking the temperature readings at 1.20 A.M. we found the shape was no longer visible.

All the time we were in Room 11 there were various creaking and chirping noises, which we put down to mice, etc.

At 1.30 A.M. I. S. L. detected a smell in the passage outside Rooms 11, 10, and 9. He described the smell as a subclinically fruity smell. It first seemed to come from Room 10, move slowly down the passage till at 3.00 A.M. it had reached the steps outside Room 9.

The other observer did not perceive the smell owing to his catarrh. At 3.10 A.M. they heard a door banged twice downstairs not very loudly, but one of the observers (I. S. L.) thought it might have been a hammering of wood. The temperatures were read at the 'cold spot,' using two thermometers, one of which was freely exposed to the atmosphere a few inches from the other, which was enclosed inside a glass test-tube by means of a firmly fitting rubber stopper. The test-tube was nearly 15 cm. long, and of diameter about 1.5 cm. The thermometer was nearly 0.7 cm. in diameter. The two thermometers were placed as far as possible on the 'cold spot,' consisting of a plank spanning a wide gap. The bulb of the thermometer outside the

tube was resting on the wood. The readings obtained are given in Table II:

TABLE II

Time A.M.	Thermometer in Tube				Thermometer on Wood °F.
	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	
1.00	—	—	—	60.2	65.1
1.10	—	—	—	57.0	65.1
1.20	—	—	—	55.7	65.1
1.30	—	—	—	55.3	65.1
1.40	—	—	—	54.9	65.1
1.50	—	—	—	54.6	65.1
2.00	—	—	—	54.4	65.1
2.10	—	—	—	54.2	65.1
2.20	—	—	—	54.2	65.1
2.30	—	—	—	54.1	65.1
2.40	—	—	—	54.0	65.1
2.50	—	—	—	54.0	65.1
3.00	—	—	—	54.0	65.1

It will be seen that there is a difference between the thermometers. The investigators did not consider this to be due to an error in reading either of them. On checking the thermometers the next day they were found accurate and to read the same temperature as each other. No results were obtained with controlled objects and pieces of paper, or with sealed tubes of liquid which would indicate certain alleged Poltergeist effects.

*Visit 15.*—An investigation by I. R. Gordon and R. M. Hay on the night of June 22, 1943, yielded no results of interest.

*Visit 16.*—A visit by J. H. Angel, I. W. Broomhead, and I. S. Longmuir on the night of July 16, 1943, was also without interest.

*Visit 17.*—A visit by R. A. Brown and J. E. Lankester on the night of July 17, 1943, again failed to yield any results of interest.

#### MORE FOOTSTEPS

*Visit 18.*—E. D. Low, R. Mills, D. B. Snushall, and K. G. Wilden-Hart visited the Rectory on the night of September 25,

1943. They found on arrival two other parties, making altogether four more persons, so that accurate investigation was made somewhat more difficult. The difficulty was partially overcome by amalgamating the three parties. The usual experiments with controlled objects, papers, etc., were tried without any result. One point of interest was noticed. Their report says:

We then returned to the house at 1 A.M. and remained in the pantry except for two members—Leeman, of London, and Wilden-Hart—who stationed themselves in the kitchen. At 1.30 A.M. six footsteps were heard by them in the courtyard; immediate investigation revealed nothing, and we therefore assumed that they were due to paranormal causes.

#### THE FOUR WHISTLES

*Visit 19.*—The Rectory was investigated by V. G. Cattrell, J. L. Howarth, V. J. Smith, and G. L. Squires on the night of December 3, 1943. To obtain further data on thermal effects a large number of temperature readings were made by the investigators, using the method of two thermometers, one enclosed in a tube and one outside. The readings were taken on the 'cold spot' again, at every minute (with a few exceptions) between 11.45 P.M. and 4.45 A.M. This gave some six hundred readings; that is a sufficient number to justify the application of statistical methods. A qualitative examination of the results does not reveal any striking fluctuations or differences between the two thermometers. The investigators also set up a stretched-spring apparatus, which might be regarded as a store of potential energy. This energy could be released by expenditure of a relatively small amount of energy. The idea of this experiment originated in an impression that many Poltergeist effects seem to result in a decrease in potential energy, judging from the literature of the subject. However, no results were obtained with the apparatus. A report on this visit prepared by one of the investigators (G. L. S.) and agreed to by the others mentions one rather curious fact. It says:

At 1.22 A.M. occurred the only happening in the night which could possibly be called suspicious. Smith was taking the thermo-

meter readings. Howarth and I were eating sandwiches in the scullery when we heard three whistles at intervals of five to ten seconds. They sounded like the noise human beings make when trying to attract somebody's attention. Each whistle was a little more insistent than the one before. At the end of the third whistle we opened the door leading out to the courtyard and asked the pair on the plank if they had whistled. On receiving the answer 'No' we shut the door, switched off our torches, and waited in silence. For the fourth time we heard the whistle, but it took about two minutes before we had mustered sufficient courage to open the other door and investigate the two rooms opposite the scullery and the back staircase. We found nothing. Cattrell and Smith recorded the whistlings independently and noted them as having happened at 1.24 A.M. Their time is probably more correct as Howarth and I did not actually note the time until several minutes later.

Sounds of movement and shuffling among some local chickens were heard just after the whistles by Cattrell and Smith. Squires thought the whistles originated from the back staircase just outside the scullery door, but Howarth thought they came from farther back in the direction of the neighbouring cottage. The whistles might have been due, as the report points out, to a person from this cottage, or to the cry of a bird. But they seemed rather human. On leaving the Rectory at 5 A.M. the investigators unanimously agreed that a sceptical attitude towards the Rectory ghosts was the correct one.

#### TEMPTING THE POLTERGEISTS

*Visit 20.*—On the night of December 6, 1943, the Rectory was visited by R. Batchelor, C. F. Elms, K. E. Machin, W. E. Ninnis, D. L. Rigby, and T. M. Robinson. The stretched-spring apparatus was used again, also an apparatus for detecting changes in the acceleration due to gravity if they amounted to 1 per cent. or more. It was apparent from the investigations so far that the phenomena noted by the various observers were only fragmentary versions of those reported in Harry Price's book. A Poltergeist manifestation might perhaps therefore degenerate to a slight change in the acceleration due to gravity. The apparatus would have recorded such changes, but actually none was noted. Other devices were also set up, mainly on the

usual lines. They gave no results, except for one small point. The report says:

The only thing which might have been paranormal was the fact that at 12.45 A.M. one of the papers on the wall outside the Blue Room was found on the floor. It had been attached by a one-inch nail which was still in place. Thus the paper would have had to be drawn along the nail for one inch to remove it. The wind was not apparently strong enough to do this; and none of the members of the party remembered rushing by or otherwise knocking off the paper.

The detailed examination of temperature effects on the 'cold spot' was continued by these investigators, using again one thermometer enclosed in a tube (to eliminate effects due to draughts and breezes to some extent) and another thermometer adjacent to it, exposed to the atmosphere. The observers took nearly two hundred temperature readings, but these do not appear to show any features of special interest. The temperature was recorded for nearly every minute from 12.30 A.M. to 2.30 A.M.

*Visit 21.*—P. H. Lord, A. G. Phillips, and M. R. V. Weaving visited the Rectory on the night of March 20, 1944. They observed that the ruin was being demolished and removed, but experienced nothing of special interest there.

#### THE LIGHT IN THE BEDROOM

*Visit 22.*—The remains were visited by P. H. Lord, C. J. Lethbridge, H. P. Lethbridge, T. Sullivan, and R. G. Watkinson on the night of April 30, 1944. The only rooms left in the building were two bedrooms (1 and 2) upstairs, the floor of a third bedroom (3), also upstairs; and downstairs the larder and dairy and two walls of the kitchen and scullery. One point of interest was noticed during the night: the appearance at times between 3.30 A.M. and 4.00 A.M. of a white, pale, and indistinct light varying slightly in size. This was first noted by C. J. L. only, from a point in the garden down by the summer-house: with him there was also T. S., asleep, the other three observers sleeping in Bedroom 2. According to C. J. L., the light appeared first in the

region of Bedroom I, and then vanished after a short time. It then appeared again, apparently in the room where the investigators were sleeping, and which faced directly on to the garden through a door. After staying some time the light vanished: the sleeping persons do not seem to have been affected in any way. Finally the light appeared in the region of the larder, first high up on the wall and then at floor-level; at this point C. J. L. woke up T. S., who then also saw the light. The effect could not have been due to any one of the observers shining a torch, since one of their two torches was with C. J. L. and the other with H. P. L., who was sleeping on it. Mention might also be made of the fact that on approaching the building up the road from Long Melford all five investigators noticed a hot wind on their faces, coming from the end of the belt of trees surrounding the garden. They thought that heat due to some chemical process among the trees might set up a convection current and produce the effect.

*Visit 23.*—C. H. Talbot, H. L. Thompson, and W. F. W. Southwood spent the night of June 5, 1944, in the ruins, but noticed nothing of interest.

*Visit 24.*—An equally uneventful time was spent on the site by A. J. B. Robertson and D. G. Julian on the night of June 9, 1944.

#### A SÉANCE IN THE SUMMER-HOUSE

*Visit 25.*—The site was visited by P. Brennan, P. Brown, C. J. Lethbridge, R. G. Watkinson, and D. Williams on the night of July 22, 1944, with the object of investigating; and, unknown to these five people, by E. R. Broome, P. J. Farr, L. B. Hunt, and P. H. Lord with the object of producing some faked 'phenomena' for the benefit of the investigators. The investigators, on arriving and finding the Rectory non-existent, retired to the summer-house to sleep: they therefore completely failed to notice several traverses of the lawn by an 'apparition.' However, by some Poltergeist 'manifestations,' the attention of the investigators was drawn to the 'apparition,' consisting actually of P. H. Lord with appropriate disguises. The silent movements of the apparition and its sudden disappearance (it was illuminated with a torch) led the investigators to think it was genuine. They

commented on the possibility of the Poltergeist effects being produced by normal means. At about 3 A.M. the jokers retired to a haystack for the night. At about 3.15 A.M. a considerable number of faint knockings were heard coming apparently from the summer-house somewhere among the observers: the position could not be precisely located, and seemed different to the various persons. After some minutes the investigators questioned the knockings with a code, of one knock for 'Yes,' two for 'No,' and three for 'Uncertain.' Intelligible replies to their questions were then obtained until about 4 A.M.<sup>1</sup> The knockings claimed to be produced by a nun who had died about 1250 in some manner about which she seemed vague. She stated that she could be helped by a minister, although not a Presbyterian one, and made several other interesting comments, including two distinctly erroneous ones when she claimed to be responsible for the faked apparition and the Poltergeist effects. At about 4 A.M. there followed fifteen or eighteen knocks in quick succession, after which they terminated. The practical jokers deny having produced this effect.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF OBSERVATIONS

During the course of these investigations fifty-eight persons have spent one or more nights at the remains of the Rectory. Of these people, seventeen have reported nothing at all out of the ordinary, twenty-two have commented on incidents which they thought might not be expected to occur in the ordinary way; and nineteen have described events which appeared to them to be rather strange. The various unusual and curious happenings recorded by the investigators fall into five categories. First and most frequent are the auditory phenomena. Their occurrence seems to be reasonably well established, although, no doubt, divergent views could be advanced to explain the various noises. Secondly, there are certain cases of visual phenomena: they are, however, few, and cannot be said to be established with any certainty. Thirdly, there is one doubtful case of the displacement of an object. Fourthly, there are two instances, both unsatisfac-

<sup>1</sup> Questions and replies recorded at this séance are given in Chapter XXII.—H.P.

tory, of the appearance of markings in pencil on paper. Finally there are certain temperature effects. It is convenient to consider each of the above categories separately.

So many of the investigators have described different sounds that it does not seem necessary to doubt the fact of the occurrence of this class of phenomenon. Whether it is necessary to advance any explanation for these noises other than purely normal events—as, for example, beams creaking and doors banging—is a problem on which it is perhaps desirable to express less decisive views. The noises are variously described by the investigators as footsteps, knockings, tappings, hammerings, thuds, bangs, cracks, rumblings, the padding of feet, the stamping of horses' hooves, and whistlings. In a number of cases the footsteps are distinguished from the other noises by the fact that they appear to move along, sometimes travelling round a room or along a corridor (*e.g.*, Visits 2, 6, and 12). In general, the footsteps appear to arise spontaneously, whereas the knockings and thuds are most frequently noted some five or ten minutes after an investigator has endeavoured to make any unseen intelligent being which might be present manifest itself. This latter feature is noticeable in Visits 3, 4, 10, 12, and 25, and is of importance in suggesting that these particular noises are not simply random events, but appear to be connected with some kind of intelligence. This is strongly indicated in Visit 25, when the knockings were able to answer a number of questions, although perhaps without accuracy. The auditory phenomena of all types usually consist of the regular repetition of the same noise for a short time. This time is usually only of the order of seconds, but more rarely may rise to a considerable number of minutes (Visits 6 and 25). The regularity of some of the noises has been commented on in some cases (*e.g.*, Visits 3, 4, and 6). A feature of some importance is that the sounds are perceived by all the observers in a suitable position to do so; the only exception to this generalization is one knock in Visit 2. This fact renders more difficult any hypothesis based on the assumption of the subjective nature of these noises. Another important generalization becomes apparent on examining the distribution of the noises in the building with respect to

the position of the observers. In nearly every case in which the location of the noises is described, they are separated from the observers by one wall or ceiling: in a very few cases there may be more than one wall intervening (Visits 10 and 12), and in one case noises were produced in the room in which the observers were situated (Visit 12). No simple relation of this kind seems to hold for the few noises arising in the grounds of the Rectory or the summer-house (Visit 25). It is also apparent from the various accounts that the noises are heard more especially when the observers are in the sewing-room (Visits 2, 4, 6, and 12, for example) or very near to it (*e.g.*, Visits 10 and 18). It is very unusual for noises to be noted when the observers are moving about in the ruins.

Turning next to the visual phenomena, it must be noted that even the occurrence of the happenings is not beyond doubt. Only six cases arise: two luminous patches of light on the walls, each of short duration (Visits 2 and 4); one black shape or dark outline (Visit 2); one whitish object crossing the lawn (Visit 12); one white shape at the base of a tree (Visit 14); and one indistinct light (Visit 22). The first four of these appearances were noted by one observer only, and then only under rather unsatisfactory conditions and for only a brief instant; it therefore seems best to attach little weight to these observations. The last two visual appearances, being of longer duration and perceived by two observers, are more difficult to explain away. However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from these shapes and lights. It is desirable that further cases should be investigated. The fundamental question as to whether the visual appearances described in cases of haunting are subjective or not seems to be not at all clear from evidence at present available, although this is clearly a most important fact requiring to be established in the study of such phenomena.

During the whole of this investigation of the Rectory only one possible case of the displacement of an object was noticed (Visit 20), and this might have arisen in several normal ways. Although certain of the auditory phenomena resemble the effects usually ascribed to Poltergeist activity, the more specific Polter-

geist manifestation of throwing and moving objects has been absent during these investigations.

The two cases of markings appearing on paper are clearly not decisive, especially that in Visit 10. The markings appearing in Visit 14 are somewhat strange, but the suggestion of the investigators that they could have put them there by accident offers an explanation which might be accepted, in view of the fact that no markings were obtained on repeating the experiment on later occasions.

There remain only the few cases of temperature variations. The fluctuations noted in Visit 2 are large, but there is no adequate control, owing to the short time for which the readings were taken. At present it seems best to regard these variations as interesting without attaching any special significance to them. During Visit 4 a very curious effect was noted: a final difference in reading between two neighbouring thermometers of  $11^{\circ}$  F., this final steady value being gradually attained over a period of about one hour. The cooler thermometer was enclosed in a glass test-tube, whereas the other thermometer, giving a steady reading throughout, was freely exposed to the atmosphere. The enclosed thermometer therefore registers the temperature of a system which is thermally insulated to some extent since heat-flow inside the glass tube should be determined mainly by thermal conduction. One explanation which might be advanced is that the observers in reading the thermometers made a mistake of ten degrees, noting the reading of the enclosed thermometer as  $54^{\circ}$  when it was really  $64^{\circ}$ . The difference would then become only one degree, which might arise as a sum of experimental errors. This hypothesis also required that initially—that is, at 1 A.M.—the true temperature of the enclosed thermometer should be  $70.2^{\circ}$ —that is,  $5.1^{\circ}$  F. above the temperature of its surroundings. This might have happened in setting up the thermometers. The rate of cooling of the enclosed thermometer would be slow on account of the partial thermal insulation mentioned above. This explanation, however, is not in agreement with the statement of the experimenters that the apparent difference in reading was not due to errors in observing the thermometer scales.

It is possibly worth noting that this effect of a difference in readings between an enclosed and a freely exposed thermometer would also arise if, by some unknown mechanism, heat was being removed from the air in the neighbourhood of the 'cold spot,' a possibility which is suggested from certain cases of physical mediumship. The air outside the closed tube would be continuously replaced by slight breezes and the effects of turbulence of various kinds, whereas that inside the tube, being completely enclosed, would cool until the rate of flow of heat to the enclosed air from the outside became equal to the rate of removal of heat by the unknown mechanism.

If any mechanism involving the removal of heat from the air can indeed operate it is clearly of interest from a thermodynamic viewpoint. Temperature drops resulting in a given volume of air subjected to the process will clearly become greater as heat-flow to the air is impeded. It is perhaps worthwhile to discuss the theory of the readings of thermometers enclosed in cylindrical tubes when heat can be removed from the air. Consider a cylinder of radius  $R$  containing along its axis a thermometer of radius  $r$ , and let the cylinder contain air of thermal conductivity  $k$ . It is first necessary to see whether convection is likely to be of any importance. This is best done by evaluating Grasshof's criterion  $G$ , given by

$$G = D^3 d^3 g a V/n^3$$

where  $D$  is the diameter of the vessel,  $g$  is the acceleration of gravity,  $V$  is the temperature difference, and  $d$ ,  $a$ , and  $n$  refer to the density, coefficient of expansion, and viscosity of the air respectively. Taking  $D = 1.5$  cm.,  $V = 6^\circ$  C., and inserting appropriate values for the other quantities, gives for the order of magnitude of  $G$  about  $10^3$ . It seems generally agreed that convection is small compared with conduction for such values of the non-dimensional Grasshof criterion. The next step is therefore to consider the steady-state temperature distribution inside the tube when heat is being removed from the air in it at a rate  $W$  per unit volume. In the case of a tube having a radius small compared with its length, only heat-flow perpendicular to

the walls need be considered to obtain a sufficiently close approximation. The isothermal surfaces are then concentric cylinders. Considering a unit length of one such concentric cylinder with radius  $x$  and having a temperature  $T$ , then in the steady state the quantity of heat flowing in through the surface must equal the quantity removed in the appropriate volume enclosed by that surface during the same time interval. The heat-conduction equation

heat-flow =

$$\frac{(\text{thermal conductivity}) \times (\text{temperature difference}) \times (\text{area})}{(\text{length})}$$

therefore becomes

$$W(\pi x^2 - \pi r^2) = \frac{2kx\pi dT}{dx}$$

since the isothermal surface of radius  $x + dx$  has temperature  $T + dT$ . If now  $T_r$  is the temperature at  $x = r$  and  $T_R$  that at  $x = R$  the above equation can be written

$$\int_{T_r}^{T_R} dT = \frac{W}{2k} \int_r^R x dx - \frac{Wr^2}{2k} \int_r^R \frac{dx}{x}$$

so that

$$T_R - T_r = \frac{W}{4k} (R^2 - r^2) - \frac{Wr^2}{2k} \log_e \frac{R}{r}$$

Putting  $T_R - T_r = 6^\circ \text{ C.}$ ,  $R = 0.75 \text{ cm.}$ ,  $r = 0.35 \text{ cm.}$ , and  $k = 6 \times 10^{-5} \text{ cals. cm.}^{-1} \text{ sec.}^{-1} \text{ C.}^{-1}$ —that is, values appropriate for the effect noted in Visit 14—gives for  $W$  the value of about 0.006 calories per cubic centimetre per second. This is the rate of heat removal required to produce the observed temperature difference.

It is also possible to calculate the rate of cooling of the thermometer in the tube when heat is being removed at a constant rate per unit volume from the air in the tube. This involves solving the general partial differential equation of heat conduction with

appropriate boundary conditions. The problem has been dealt with by E. D. Low. He obtains a solution in terms of Bessel functions, and the calculated rate of cooling of the thermometer using the above numerical value for  $W$  agrees with the observed rate within a factor of two. The cooling curve can be approximated to by an exponential decay on expanding the various functions. Since the unsteady-state problem involves specific heat terms which are absent in the elementary steady-state formulation, there is no reason why the two calculations should both agree with the experimental data. The fact that they do might, however, be fortuitous.

The above treatment is, of course, only of a suggestive nature, and cannot be definitely advanced as an explanation of the observed effect. The question of the association of temperature variations with the phenomena of haunting is one to which the most profitable approach in the present state of knowledge would seem to be the experimental one.

After this review of the data collected in a prolonged investigation of the Borley Rectory case, one difficult and important question remains—namely, to what extent do the results appear to be inexplicable in terms of normal concepts? It is clear that any argument for the operation at the Rectory of some paranormal factor would, if based on this work alone, have to proceed mainly from the auditory phenomena—that is, precisely those events most likely to result from normal causes. Nevertheless, it must be noted that although noises may occur naturally in many ways, the probability that they would so accidentally happen as to render valid all the points already discussed would seem to be distinctly small. There appears, in fact, to be something at the Rectory which cannot be at all easily explained away. It must be remembered that the investigations described here form only part of a much wider survey which has brought to light very many mysterious phenomena.

It seems at present, therefore, that no very definite conclusions can be reached from this work. Further elucidation of these problems may come with further research, and perhaps some of

the indications we have obtained may be of some use to future investigators.

#### COMMENTS<sup>1</sup>

I will take this opportunity of publicly thanking Mr Robertson and his colleagues for the time and trouble they took in carrying out this important investigation, and in preparing the many reports of their visits, which were sent to me on completion. These very full protocols, with graphs, tables, sketches, and diagrams, have been deposited with the Borley *dossier* in my library at the University of London. And I must thank Mr Robertson especially for preparing such a full and interesting summary.

Mr Robertson and his friends were at a disadvantage in many ways. The Rectory was in ruins, and any sort of comfort was almost impossible—unlike the time when my own official observers did duty there, when we managed to establish a cosy Base Room, with firing, lighting, hot meals, and even a bed.<sup>2</sup> Not only was the house in ruins when the Commission began its work, but towards the end of their labours the house-breakers arrived and they were driven to shelter between a few half-demolished walls; and during the last observational period they even had to take refuge in the summer-house! Then the Rectory had ceased to exist: not one brick stood upon another. Now only the site remains for future investigators.

Again, it is well known that *occupied* haunted houses produce more phenomena than unoccupied ones. Ghosts—especially Poltergeists—are fond of company. The best periods at Borley for observing manifestations were (a) when the Bull family, with their fourteen—or seventeen—children were living at the Rectory; and (b) when the Rev. L. A. Foyster and his wife, and the two infants, were occupying the house.

A third disadvantage was the fact that the Rectory phenomena were growing *weaker*, and had been for years. This is well known to those who have studied the Borley case. More than one reader of my book remarked upon this. For example, Mr Derek M. Hall, of 229 London Road, Reading, says (October 10, 1942):

To my mind, the most interesting feature of the Borley case from the point of view of psychical research, is the way each kind of phenomena grew gradually weaker until it finally disappeared; e.g., the throwing of various objects, the bell ringing, and, most interesting of all, the deterioration of the wall writings.

I agree. I can only suggest, as a cause, that the phenomena were

<sup>1</sup> By Harry Price.

<sup>2</sup> For picture of Base Room, see *The Most Haunted House in England*, Plate III.

burning themselves out; that the haunt was drawing near to its natural end, and had nearly run its course, as all haunts do—in time; that fifteen years' investigation, by nearly two hundred people, had frightened the 'ghosts' away or had rendered them incapable of manifesting themselves; or that we did, in fact, by our genuine concern for the various entities, bestow upon them some measure of relief. In the case of the 'nun' I believe this to be a fact.

Mr Robertson and his colleagues were also handicapped by the fact that their visits were too infrequent—sometimes months elapsed between the departure of one contingent and the arrival of the next. There was a lack of continuity which they could not avoid, owing to their academic studies. Their university work was also responsible for the fact that the observational groups were continually changing in personnel: Mr Robertson himself was able to be present only eight times out of the twenty-five visits to the Rectory, owing to his duties at Cambridge. But in spite of all the disadvantages I have named, Mr Robertson's Commission was an outstanding success—a success that speaks volumes for his organizing powers, and a success that has added valuable additional evidence for the haunting of Borley Rectory.

As for the manifestations experienced by the various groups, all had been seen or heard before by previous investigators. They are, therefore, confirmatory phenomena. The 'luminous patch appearing on the wall' (Visit 2) was paralleled on the night of February 16-17, 1938, when a party of four from Oxford (also undergraduates) visited the Rectory. One of them, Mr S. G. Welles, Rhodes Scholar of University College, saw a 'luminous patch of light on the ceiling,'<sup>1</sup> which disappeared, reappeared, and slowly moved backwards and forwards. Extensive experiments were afterwards made in an endeavour to reproduce the light normally, but all failed. Mr Welles says: 'None of these even remotely suggested what I felt I had seen.'<sup>2</sup> A similar luminosity was witnessed by one of the Cambridge men during Visit 4.

Mr Robertson, who saw the luminous patch on the wall during Visit 2, amplifies his experiences during this period in an article in *The Eagle*,<sup>3</sup> a magazine conducted by members of St John's College. He says:

At midnight (G.M.T.) we noted a rise in temperature of two degrees, followed again by a fall. The house remained astonishingly silent for a long time, until we were suddenly frightened out of a rather drowsy state by hearing three or four heavy, slow, and very

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 224-226

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge (June 1943), pp. 121-125. (This issue of *The Eagle* was actually published at the end of October 1944.)

distinct footsteps just immediately behind the wall against which we were leaning. With some trepidation we looked at the door, expecting that some monstrosity might appear. But the noises ceased, so we proceeded to investigate immediately, and on looking at the region from which the noises appeared to have come I saw quite clearly a dark shape move from the moonlight into the shadows. But when we illuminated the whole patch of shadow with a red light nothing unusual could be seen.

Also during Visit 4 the familiar rumblings and furniture moving were heard. This was a common phenomenon at Borley and elsewhere, and is a true Poltergeist effect. Sir Walter Scott records<sup>1</sup> a similar incident at Abbotsford in 1818. He said the noise 'resembled half a dozen men hard at work putting up boards and furniture.' During Visit 6 more 'dragging' noises were heard, and on another occasion (Visit 10) was recorded: 'Three times rumbling, resembling that made by a heavy piece of furniture being moved over the floor.'

Those members of the Commission who visited the Rectory on September 22, 1942 (Visit 6), had some exceedingly interesting experiences. The ticking of a clock heard principally by Mr J. E. Lankester (but also by the other observers) was particularly striking in view of the fact that his mother, many miles away, and at about the same time, was awakened by a clock ticking in her room—in which there was *no* clock. Still more striking, his mother thought of her son at about the same time and wondered if he too was being disturbed by the ticking of a clock. This was *not* coincidence. Mother and son were *en rapport*, but the exciting cause is not known. Perhaps Mrs Lankester was subconsciously fearing that her son was in some danger in the 'haunted house.'

The 'stamping of the horse' outside the Rectory, on the familiar 'hollow road' (Visit 9), was a common—and ancient—phenomenon at Borley, and I have already cited examples in this book. The five observers who heard this particular manifestation knew nothing about the story of the 'horses' or 'coach and horses,' so suggestion does not enter into the question. And the fact that *five* persons heard the 'horse' simultaneously proves that it was not a subjective illusion. As Mr Robertson emphasizes, this particular phenomenon, like so many others experienced during the latter days of the Rectory's existence, was but a 'fragmentary version of the original one'—a shadow of its former self.

Strange noises were the chief feature of Visit 12, the truly Poltergeist effect of 'stone-throwing' being perhaps an echo of the many

<sup>1</sup> See my *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 17-18. Many similar incidents are recorded in this book.

stones that were actually thrown during the palmy days of the haunting.

The steady drop in temperature (Visit 14) measured on the 'cold spot' is confirmatory evidence of the fact that several people have become suddenly cold at this particular point outside the Blue Room —a point exactly over a curious subsidence in the cellar, where we discovered the ancient foundations of a previous building on the Rectory site. Excavations were made at this subsidence, in the hope of finding something that might account for the lowered temperature, but we discovered nothing. The experiments during Visit 14 at least proved that the 'coldness' experienced by observers at this point was in fact physical and not merely physiological. During Visit 11 there was also a 'steady fall in temperature.' During the night of June 19-20 there was also experienced a 'subclinically fruity smell,' reminiscent of many such smells (lavender, incense, etc.) recorded by observers at the Rectory at various times. And it will be remembered that Mr Medcraft noticed a 'strong but pleasant aroma' that reminded him of flowers.

Finally, on the night of April 30, 1944 (Visit 22), the Cambridge observers saw the 'light' in Bedrooms 1 and 2 (see Plan III). It was this particular phenomenon that took me to the Rectory, on my first visit, on June 12, 1929. The light had been seen in Room 7, in the older part of the building. I did not see it myself, but several people did, intermittently, including Mr V. C. Wall, the *Daily Mirror*<sup>1</sup> representative. A similar phenomenon was also recorded by the Rev. G. E. Smith and his wife; by Herbert Mayes, the Hennings' chauffeur, and by their maid; by Mr and Mrs Basil Payne, of Borley Place, a house nearly opposite the Rectory; and by many villagers. This 'light in the bedroom,' and the raps that appeared to come from the back of the mirror in the Blue Room, were the first phenomena that I recorded in the Borley *dossier*, on June 12, 1929. It is curious that among the last entries in the annals of Borley Rectory should be included the 'light' and the raps heard in the summer-house (Visit 25). This may seem strange, but everything connected with Borley is strange.

<sup>1</sup> See this journal for June 11, 1929.

## CHAPTER X

### SUGGESTED CAUSATION OF THE BORLEY PHENOMENA

*By the Rev. CANON W. J. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS, D.D.  
Canon of Carlisle*

*[I have great pleasure in reproducing in this volume Dr Phythian-Adams's brilliant analysis of the Borley drama. Canon Phythian-Adams has been Canon of Carlisle since 1932, and Chaplain to the King since 1933; is the author of many works on the Scriptures and archaeology; was the Assistant Director of the British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem; and was a Lieutenant-Colonel (D.S.O., etc.) in the First World War. These, and other achievements, are recorded in 'Who's Who.' Dr Phythian-Adams was the first person correctly to interpret the wall-writings (the Marianne appeals) at Borley Rectory—an interpretation that led us eventually to excavate there. The pagination in his essay, and the numbering of the plates, refer to my original monograph. The plates in the present volume should be studied in conjunction with Dr Phythian-Adams's text.—H.P.]*

*To: Harry Price, Esq.  
19 Berkeley Street  
Mayfair, W.1*

*The Abbey  
Carlisle  
January 8, 1941*

DEAR SIR,

I hope it will not bore you to read this effort of mine to 'diagnose the trouble' at Borley Rectory. (I read and re-read your very interesting book over the Christmas holiday, and this is the fruit of my studies!)

'Fools step in', etc., no doubt, but even if I am on the wrong track no harm will be done. Normally, it would seem pretty hopeless to look for 'clues' in a case of this kind, though I have had a healthy respect for psychical research (proper) ever since I read Myers' *Human Personality*<sup>1</sup> years ago. But here, though it is impossible to say how the phenomena occurred, thanks to you we can

<sup>1</sup> *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, by F. W. H. Myers (London, 1903).—H. P.

be sure that they did occur: and it seems to me, therefore, that we are entirely justified in asking the question, 'Why did they occur?'

If the same or similar conclusions have already been reached by you it may at least be of some interest that I have arrived at them independently. If they have not, and you think there is something in them, I should value your comments. I would only add that this is not a *jeu d'esprit*. It seems to me that (again thanks to you) we have here for the first time (so far as I know, but my knowledge of the subject is mediocre) the possibility of testing the evidential value of certain of these phenomena. If this is so it would be a great pity to leave the case where it stands. There are at least two lines of further investigation which can be followed up, and if they confirmed my conclusions it would be a striking triumph for psychical research.

Yours very truly,  
(Signed) W. J. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS

#### THE BORLEY HAUNT

The phenomena collected and recorded by Mr Harry Price in his book on Borley Rectory<sup>1</sup> strongly suggest that we have here a genuine 'haunt.' The focus of their activity, in other words, would seem to be a crime of a peculiarly distressing nature, which has 'impregnated' the spot with the thoughts (and some of the actions) of the victims: and the stirring up of the ground by the building of the new Rectory and the presence in it of its living occupants have combined to release a new and powerful outpouring of this inexplicable psychic energy. Let us at any rate make this assumption, to which I would add another: this is, that the objects brought specially to the notice of the investigators, more particularly the 'apports,' were intended (no matter by whom!) to assist their work as clues of a *general* nature and can be relied upon on this understanding. For example, the 'strange coat' apport is meant to indicate that the victim was a woman, but not that she was the actual owner of the coat. Similarly, the gilt Confirmation medallion (p. 59) means that she was a Roman Catholic, but not that the medallion belonged to her. (It may also suggest that she was a young Roman Catholic.) Once again the French Revolution badge (p. 59) signifies that she was a French woman, but not that she lived necessarily in

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England.*

The block letters in the bottom specimen were  
written by Mrs Foyster and Kerr-Pearse  
respectively.



the eighteenth century. These objects, I take it, were picked up (somewhere) as being the nearest approximation to the truth that were available: they are clues, but rough clues. At any rate, if we make use of this assumption we get some decidedly interesting results.

Let us begin, then, with the victim, about whom we already seem to have gathered some information. She was a young (?) French Roman Catholic, a fact confirmed by two further pieces of evidence provided *on the spot*. First, there is the wall-writing appeal for 'light Mass and prayers' (I suggest that 'light' here is an *adjective* qualifying both 'Mass' and 'prayers,' and that it refers to the prayer used both privately and at Requiems, 'Let *light* perpetual shine upon them'). By itself, of course, this merely shows that the victim was not an Anglican in the post-Reformation sense of the word, since we can leave 'Anglo-Catholicism' out of count here altogether. But then in the second place there is the apparition of the 'Nun' or 'Sister of Mercy.' Now it seems always to have been taken for granted that this apparition must belong to pre-Reformation times, and a convenient 'monk' has therefore been invented by legend to account for the tragedy. But, of course, the apparition by itself gives us no indication of its date, and if we link it with the appearance of the *coach*, for which the 'Nun' seems to have been constantly on the watch by the roadside (pp. 56-58), a pre-Reformation date (as Mr Price points out) is definitely excluded. On the other hand, if these two phenomena are to be combined (and it seems clear that they must be), and if we tie up with them the appearance of the little old man (pp. 49, 54) who seems to have been the gardener Amos (lived in seventeenth century?); and if we add to this again our previous evidence that the victim was *French*, we arrive at a very different conclusion. *Then we have a French woman (probably young) who has been brought to England from a French convent at some date in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.*

Now this conclusion is strikingly corroborated by the Planchette replies given to Miss Glanville, first alone and afterwards with Mr Glanville and Mr Kerr-Pearse. Normally one would not take much notice of this mode of divination, which is

justifiably suspected of reflecting the thoughts of its users. But in this case it will be noted (p. 160) not only that 'Marianne' was called upon before any question was asked, but (what is still more remarkable) that the replies subsequently given persisted steadily in ignoring the legendary story of the 'monk' and Bures 'nunnery.' Whenever leading questions on either of these were put the answers were almost invariably indistinct, absent, or obviously irrelevant, a fact which was quickly recognized by the questioner. Discounting, then, those occasions on which a simple (and meaningless) 'Yes' was returned to such inquiries, we are left with the quite explicit statement that the victim was a Mary Lairre (La Irre?), a French girl of nineteen years of age, who was a novice in a nunnery at Havre (first written Haiv), and was murdered (strangled) by 'Waldegrave' on May 17, 1667.

Our previous conclusion about the victim being thus abundantly confirmed by Planchette, we may reasonably be more disposed to trust this source in what it has to tell us about the murder and its perpetrator. Again it will be noticed that the questioner was still pursuing the mythical 'Fadenoch' or 'Father Enoch' (p. 161), and that no one up to this time appears to have thought of the family which 'played a major part in Borley during some three hundred years' from the beginning of the fifteenth century (p. 13). But now the name 'Waldegrave' comes out at us, like a bolt from the blue; and remembering the odd disturbance of the coffins in the crypt of Borley Church (p. 50; it is not, of course, said that they were Waldegrave coffins but the probability is considerable), we have good grounds for following up this accusation. We return, then, to Borley itself to see whether any clue has been provided there which would point us to the same quarter. Unmistakably, I believe, we find that such a clue *has* been given, namely the 'touchwood' apport 'roughly three feet square,' which was found by Mr Kerr-Pearse on the hearth of the sewing-room (p. 206) and which was later psychometrized by 'Marion' (p. 138). 'Marion's' evidence is admittedly confused and not easy to disentangle: nevertheless it can be made, I think, to yield some very interesting hints. This piece of wood seems to have been either a part of a relic (or

'treasure') or (as I think more probable) part of a box which once contained a relic (or 'treasure') which was brought from 'another continent' and later 'wandered about.' 'It went,' so 'Marion' says, 'to different places. I do not know which place to say at the outset, or how to describe the sort of country. It is a sort of old-fashioned building with small buildings adjoining. A small island.' Immediately one thinks of Iona, the sanctuary-home of St Columba, or of Holy Island, the refuge of St Cuthbert, to either of which such a relic might well have been brought from 'another continent.' Certainly the description cannot possibly be that of Borley.

But now comes a most incongruous statement. 'There is no peace or rest. There is a sort of feud or quarrel between two families—two sorts of ideas. They are not enemies, but have a quarrel between each other, not for something but for ideas or ideals. . . . Their lives did not touch.' Now all this is patently inapplicable to such an abode of peace and rest as the 'small island,' 'without any surroundings.' We conclude, therefore, that the scene has shifted. After circling about to decide where he was to start 'Marion' chose a spot in *this* part of the world rather than in that 'other continent' where he *might* have begun, but, having described this spot, he sees the picture dissolve into one of people 'coming and going.' The scene has shifted—and the date. For, of course, his new picture is easily recognizable. What he is describing *now* is the turbulent chaos of the Reformation, when men were 'enemies,' but not in the normal sense, and 'ideas or ideals,' not material ambitions, divided them. Now in such a time as this, where would a sacred relic or 'treasure' find refuge? Obviously, with those who were loyal to the 'Old Religion,' and since it was not they but their enemies who gained the ascendant, their lot was doomed to be one of frustration and unhappiness. And this is precisely what 'Marion' goes on to say. 'One of the last owners [of the relic or 'treasure'] was a very tall man. . . . He was a public man who played a big part in public life. . . . He died a lonely man . . . disappointed with life and his work.' And later, when 'Marion' had been told for the first time about Borley Church and its history, he added that

the apport had 'a general association with a church. *But people in the Church were enemies to him.*'

Now all this as it stands is, of course, quite general and vague. But if we remember that the apport came from the site of—or near—the old Waldegrave manor of Borley; that the Waldegraves were Papists and therefore enemies of 'people in the Church'; and that one of them, Sir Edward, after being M.P. and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, actually died as a prisoner in the Tower for loyalty to the 'old Religion,' the statements of 'Marion' at once assume a new significance. (We may note also in passing the legend of the lost 'treasure' of Borley [p. 51] and the 'perfect drawing of a chalice' produced during the Planchette experiments.) It is indeed hardly too much to say that 'Marion' seems to have been describing Sir Edward himself! But, if this is so, then the significance of the apport clue is simultaneously and most clearly revealed. Like all other clues, its indication is only a rough one. It does not point to any one particular member of the Waldegrave family, but it does most loudly and distinctly say 'Waldegrave'—and this is just what Planchette also said!

Putting all these hints together, we seem now in a position to construct a general picture of the tragedy which underlies them. It is indeed not an unfamiliar story which gradually comes to light, and though the details necessarily escape us, the main events in it seem only too clear. We see a young Waldegrave on his travels welcomed by his co-religionists abroad, becoming infatuated with the young French novice with whom he contrives clandestine meetings, carrying her off, marrying her (the 'wedding-ring' apport is of great importance here), bringing her home to England and settling her, perhaps in secrecy, in the old, remote family manor of Borley. (The seat of the family proper was at Chewton, in Somerset.) After this the story develops on all too familiar lines. The husband departs, leaving his young French bride, a foreigner among strange faces, marooned in an empty countryside and watching and waiting only for his return. (How often did she walk that path of hers, how often stand by the road in hopeless grief?) But when he

does return, when at last that long-expected coach swings round the bend, he comes back not as a loving husband but as a pitiless enemy, resolved to remove the barrier which he finds now between him and a more 'suitable' or profitable marriage. Melodrama? Perhaps. But somehow I have the feeling that this haunting of Borley cannot so easily be brushed aside. Deep in this fantastic record there is a poignant agony, neither lightly caused nor, as it would appear, lightly solaced; an agony not of remorse, but of young innocence, foully betrayed and murdered.

So much then for the crime and for its perpetrator, whom I think we can reasonably identify with the 'tall dark man' seen once by Miss Ethel Bull (p. 46). The question then arises, what did he do with the body? Ostensibly, one presumes, the mysterious young foreigner who had lived so long by herself at the Manor would have been given out as having departed in that midnight coach. (Perhaps 'old Amos,' if he was alive then, might have had his doubts, but there would be no one to contradict the story.) In actual fact, however, it may be taken as certain that she never left the manor, alive or dead: she was murdered and buried on the spot. But where? In the garden? This was the answer made both by Planchette and in Mr Glanville's table-turning experiments, but it was an answer too readily given to satisfy the questioner (see p. 160), and it conflicts with the essential fact that the focus of the haunt was *in the house* and seems to have emanated (to judge from the position of the 'cold spot') from the cellar. Have we any evidence which bears out this more probable conclusion? I think we have. The first clue (there are at least two, to my mind) is found in the wall-writing which Mr Price reads as 'Marianne At Get Help—Entant Bottom Me,' which is of course meaningless as it stands. But after scrutinizing the excellent photograph of this writing (Plate VI) [ and Plate IX of present volume] very carefully I am convinced that this reading can be improved. The 'Marianne' is well and distinctly written, but the three (or if we include a single word, four) lines which follow below it, one beneath the other, are partly superimposed as if by some one writing in semi-darkness, and are therefore not easily deciphered. First,

immediately under the 'ri' of 'Marianne' there seems to have been an abortive attempt to write 'get' (Mr Price's 'At'). Then the writer started again below, a little farther to the left, and wrote quite plainly: 'Get help.' After this the writing begins again still farther, but not much, below, and still farther to the left; and the first letter seems evidently to be a 'W.' But then the writer found that if the word was continued along this level it would run into the 'Get help' just above it; so without being removed from the wall, the pencil described a sort of reversed S curve, first upward and outward to complete the right-hand upright of the 'W,' then downward and once more upward *to form the next letter on the new lower level*. This latter is quite clearly an *e*, and it is followed by two very sharply pointed 'peaks' which may be read either as an inclined *n* or as a double *t* (as in 'bottom' just below, though there, one at least of the *t*'s is probably crossed) or as a double *l*. After this there is a blank interval, and then, pretty clearly, the letters *t*, *a*, and *n*, the last finishing with a strong upward stroke with a curious kind of double loop near the bottom on its left-hand side but with the last stroke crossing it to the right. Mr Price reads this last letter as a *t*, but this reading does not take into account the odd convolutions near its base. It looks, in fact, as if the writer were trying to form a somewhat less usual letter, but made a mess of it for some reason unknown to us. I suggest that this letter is a bungled (reversed) *k*. The message then reads: 'Marianne, Get Help . . . Well . . . Tank . . . Bottom me.'

Now this reading, which I arrived at before I had read the end of the book, is very strikingly corroborated on later pages. I was, of course, already aware that there were two *wells* on the premises of the Rectory, one in the cellar and the other in the covered passage of the new wing. What I was *not* prepared to hear was that the former, being investigated by Mr Kerr-Pearse, turned out to be a 'tank,' though '*at one time it was a deep well, and was filled in for safety's sake*' (p. 207). This is odd enough, but what makes the matter still more curious is Captain Gregson's story of the heavy hatch-cover which he put over this well or tank but which was found to have been thrown off it 'some

distance away' (p. 171); and to this phenomenon we may add the apport clue of the dry, flat, and dusty petrified frog (p. 207) which suggests a 'place-once-wet-but-now-filled-in,' if one may use this 'holophrase.' One would much like to know *who* first filled in this well, and *whose* 'safety' was at stake when it was filled in! For obviously, if you want a 'safe' place for the corpse of your victim, such a well (assuming you have two) can hardly be bettered. All you have then to do is to proclaim it dangerous and seal up for ever the evidence of your guilt! (I wonder, by the way, whether the 'lumps of stone' apports [pp. 63-64] may not have been designed as pointers to this filling-up of the well. Did they and the glass with them actually come out of the 'tank'?)

I come now to the message which appeared on the wall after Mrs Foyster had written her request for more information (p. 146 and Plate VI). Mr Price reads this as 'Light in . . . Write Prayer and O . . .'; but I think that a close examination discloses something of much greater interest. To begin with, there seems to be no doubt that the word after 'light' is the French word 'trompée'<sup>1</sup> (the accent slightly misplaced to the left) written in an easy and flowing hand. Indeed, I am inclined to call it the best-written word in all these messages, for the English letters, where they are most distinct, have a stiff copy-book air about them. I am not a spiritualist, and I make no attempt to explain this phenomenon, but *the impression given* is certainly that of a Frenchwoman (note the feminine termination) breaking into her own language to protest that she is the victim of a cruel deception. Be that as it may, however, the appearance of this French word gives us, I believe, a valuable clue to the decipherment of the rest of the message. For it is hardly likely that it stands alone, and if it does not it is reasonable to suppose that the message is in *two* parts, the one in English and the other in French. But if there is such a division where does it come and how is it marked? The answer, as I hope to show, is to be found in the line drawn diagonally downwards from near to the top of the *t* in 'trompée' to the middle of the *d* in 'and.' To the left of this, *downward*, we have the familiar appeal for

<sup>1</sup> From the French verb *tromper*, to deceive, cheat, dupe.—H. P.

'light mass' (requiem), etc., to the right of it a response to Marianne's request for more information. Let us take these two in turn.

(i) The word under 'light' begins with an unmistakable *M* (capital), and this is followed by three 'peaks,' the first two irregularly inclined to the left, the third making a vertical loop above the up-stroke of the *d* in 'and.' As it stands, this is, of course, meaningless, but since the whole word is a mere scrawl, it is not too much to assume that the second letter is a bungled *a* and the last two *s*. The writer seems to have realized that the pencil had got out of control on this line, with the result that the 'and' which follows in line 3 is scrupulously and even painfully formed! And there this part of the message ends, as I believe; and I suggest that it remained unfinished because it occurred to the writer that Marianne had already received this request for 'Light Mass and [Prayers]' and had asked for something new. This part of the message was therefore abruptly broken off, and a new start made on line 1.

(ii) The new message begins, as we have seen, with the word 'trompée,' and a most revealing word it is! For, claiming as it does to come from the victim, it protests her innocence of any heinous sin and thereby denies indirectly the guilty-nun legend which Marianne (in common with others) had presumably got well fixed in her mind! Here, in fact, is something of that 'more' for which she had asked!

What, then, of the rest of the message? Unfortunately line 2 is very hard to decipher, but I think the first three letters are clearly *R* (capital), *é* (with accent), and *p*. The *p* is very oddly made, for it has a long vertical loop (instead of the horizontal loop in 'trompée') which looks at first sight like an *l*. I believe, however, that it is simply a 'squiggle,' since it overlies the main loop of the *p* instead of forming a separate letter on its right. Possibly the pencil slipped, for at this point the writing runs over a thumb-print, which I imagine was on the wall before the message was written (unless I altogether mistake the care and skill of Mr Price's investigators!).<sup>1</sup> Certainly the grease of this

<sup>1</sup> It was there when I rented the Rectory.—H. P.

print has affected the *o* in ‘trompée,’ and it is also responsible, I make no doubt, for the illegibility of the next two letters. All I can suggest about these (for the moment) is that the second seems to be a badly formed *n*. It is followed by a much more distinct letter which looks like an *o*, but is finished off with a stroke drawn upward to the right across its lower half. I think it is meant to be a *d*, but if so it has been very rapidly written or rather scrawled. This stroke carries the writing right up into the line above, but what follows can be disentangled without any very great difficulty. Pretty obviously it is a new word which begins here, and I read it confidently as ‘ici.’ The *C* is very large in proportion to the other letters, but this is probably because, while its top is more or less level with the first *i*, its tail falls back to the level of line 2, at which level the rest of the word is continued.

We have now considered the whole of this line with the exception of a kidney-shaped oval which cuts the bottom of the *t* in ‘trompée’, surrounds the *e* in line 2, and finishes level with the bottom of line 3. It is with the ‘and’ in this line that Mr Price connects it, and it is certainly *possible* that it is the initial letter of a word which was never finished. Personally I doubt this, for we should expect it in that case to be a *P*; nor does its appearance of a deflated *O* consist well with the careful writing of the ‘and’ in front of it. I suspect that it was a scrawl made before the message was written, and that it may have nothing to do with that phenomenon at all. Excluding this, then, we may read line 2 of this part of the message ‘Répxn(?)d(?) ici.’ Now one of the letters in the first of these words is definitely indecipherable and two more are uncertain, so that it may seem hardly worthwhile to attempt a reconstruction. At the same time I must point out that the number of possible French words beginning with ‘Rép’ is not a large one, and that *these* three letters appear to be quite distinct. For this reason I make bold to suggest that what the writer meant to say was ‘Répond ici,’ which would make excellent sense. Marianne had asked to be told more, and this had been done in the one word ‘trompée.’ No doubt the writer would have added further information, but it looks

as if the power available (whatever it was) was extremely limited as well as fluctuating in intensity. (Contrast the scrawled 'Mass' between the two well-written words 'Light,' 'And.') All that could be done, then, was to scribble an appeal to Marianne to carry on her questioning by the method which she had already begun to use—*i.e.*, by writing a new question on the wall ('ici'). This question, which would itself have been an answer ('Répond') to the writer's 'trompée,' would naturally have been 'By whom?' Whether it would have been answered is another matter, but unfortunately by this time Mrs Foyster was no longer living at the Rectory.

CANON PHYTHIAN-ADAMS'S NEW INTERPRETATION OF A  
'MARIANNE' WALL-MESSAGE

*Top:* An Analysis of the Wording.  
*Bottom:* The Words 'Light Trompée' detached from Their Context.

One word may be said in conclusion on aspects of this case which have not been mentioned. The phenomena apparently connected with the Rev. Harry Bull were no doubt due to his absorbing interest in the haunt when he was alive. That interest was, as it were, sucked into the vortex of psychic energy which revolved round the crime, and even activities like 'old Amos' and the garden bonfire<sup>1</sup> appear to have shared the same fate

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the 'smoke on the lawn' phenomenon. (See pp. 110-111.)—H.P.

(p. 202). The more familiar Poltergeist 'goings-on' hardly need comment, for they have so many parallels that we cannot regard them as illuminating this particular haunt. It seems, too, pretty clear that Mrs Foyster was a strong 'Poltergeist-focus' and that she was responsible (of course, unconsciously) for the violence of the phenomena during her residence at the Rectory. I have wondered incidentally, while reading this book, whether she had herself at one time been a Papist (French Canadian?). If that were so it would account for the appeals being directed to her, quite apart from her being psychic. I would suggest, however, that all these are details of secondary importance which must not be allowed to muddle the main issue. Through all this hugger-mugger of bumps, thuds, cracks, clicks, shuffling and padding footsteps, and the rest, one must keep clearly in view the one underlying *fons et origo* of them all, the crime which began with a peculiarly heartless desertion and ended in a peculiarly atrocious murder. For I think it will be agreed that, if our reconstruction of this horror comes anywhere near the truth, there is no need to look further for an explanation of the Borley haunt.

W. J. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS

#### NOTES<sup>1</sup>

As some of Dr Phythian-Adams's references may seem obscure to those readers not in possession of my first monograph, it will be as well to elucidate certain points. The Canon purposely used the original pagination, assuming that *The Most Haunted House in England* would be available.

I have already referred to the 'strange coat' (Chapter I), which needs no further mention here. As for 'old Amos,' this 'character' is traditional in the Bull family, and his idiosyncrasies are well remembered. I was informed that he flourished in the seventeenth century, as the Canon suggests.

'Marion' (i.e., Josef Kraus) is a Czechoslovak vaudeville telepathist and psychometrist,<sup>2</sup> possessing some extraordinary faculties which, however, may not be paranormal. He was under test in my laboratory for some years, and we were impressed with his work. He

<sup>1</sup> By Harry Price.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of 'Marion's' work, see my *Confessions of a Ghost-hunter* (London, 1936), pp. 272-277.

psychometrized<sup>1</sup> the piece of touchwood that suddenly appeared during one of Mr Kerr-Pearse's observational periods, with interesting results, as Canon Phythian-Adams points out.

The 'chalice' was part of the Borley Church plate that disappeared many years ago, and attempts have been made to find it. An excellent drawing of a chalice appeared on one of the Planchette scripts in answer to a question. The 'wedding-ring' apport was the one that Mr Motion and I found on the floor of the Blue Room on the last day of my tenancy of the Rectory. A similar wedding-ring apport also suddenly appeared at the Rectory some years previously, during the Foysters' occupation of the house.

Dr Phythian-Adams's interpretation of the wall-writings is ingenious and, I am convinced, correct. His experience in deciphering inscriptions, and his archaeological excavations at Jerusalem, in Northern Syria, the Sudan, Palestine, and elsewhere, obviously fitted him for the task of unravelling the Borley 'hieroglyphics.' What I cannot understand is why every one—including myself—missed the French '*trompée*,' which, as the Canon points out, is the plainest word (with the exception of 'Marianne') inscribed on the Rectory walls. (See Plate IX.)

A week or so after Dr Phythian-Adams sent me his essay he re-examined the wall-writing photographs and came to the conclusion that the message: 'Marianne, Get Help . . . Well . . . Tank . . . Bottom me' should read: 'Marianne Get Help. Well . . . Tank . . . Bottom me.' It is only the question of a comma, but the sense of the appeal is altered and is now more logical. The reason why we originally read it as: 'Marianne—at—get—Help—Entant—Bottom—Me' was that we concluded that the writer was trying to convey the fact that she was 'repentant.' However, as the Borley story gradually unfolds, it is obvious that 'Mary Lairre' had nothing to repent of. I am sorry that she did not sign the messages.

In another letter the Canon suggests that young Waldegrave may only have filled in the 'well-tank' partially; or, if he were leaving Borley, may not have filled it in at all. He says:

I raise this point after subsequent reflection, because I have begun to wonder whether that young woman's skull (found in the library cupboard by the wife of the Rev. G. E. Smith) may not have come from the well. Here again I think it would be most valuable to find out if any of the Bulls remember it being filled in.

No one remembers the wells being filled in (the 'tank' completely, and the round one partially), and no one now knows anything about the skull.

<sup>1</sup> See my first monograph, pp. 137-138.

In a further note the Canon says:

One wonders what was the provenance of this skull. Was it found during the excavations on the site of the new Rectory, and if so, where? Who made a parcel of it? (A woman in all probability, on account of the neatness—perhaps Mrs Henry Bull?) And why was it not buried at the time of its discovery? It is most unfortunate that we have apparently no answer to these questions, but I think we may take it as highly probable that the skull *was* discovered either in the cellar well (before it was made a tank) or in the cellar subsidence below the 'cold spot.' It may very well have been kept in the expectation that other parts of the skeleton would be found later, when all of them could have been interred together; and that it was afterwards forgotten. But if the Misses Bull have no remembrance of it this incident may be one more paranormality at Borley Rectory, and we must add the skull to our list of 'apport' clues.

I agree with all that Canon Phythian-Adams says in support of his argument that the French medallions, the wedding-ring, the 'strange coat,' etc. were 'apports' sent as 'pointers' to indicate either what we were to look for; to put us on the right road to a solution of the mystery; or to explain to us what we had already found. If this assumption is correct then the 'skull in the cupboard' might be a pointer to the skull in the 'well-tank'—where we actually found a small portion of a woman's skull.

In a letter to me (December 20, 1942) Canon Phythian-Adams makes some further suggestions about Mr Kerr-Pearse's 'touchwood apport.' He says:

In my analysis I mentioned Iona and Holy Island as the kind of 'small island' that 'Marion' psychometrized; but the difficulty then was that he seemed to break off and start on the new topic of the Reformation. But suppose the 'small island' were the 'Isle of Avalon,'<sup>1</sup> the holiest place in England (as it was thought)? I don't know the history of Glastonbury, but I suppose it was destroyed in Edward VI's reign, if not in Henry VIII's. Could the monks have given a relic to the Waldegrave family for safe keeping? Was that why Mary rewarded Sir Edward Waldegrave with Chewton [the principal home of the Waldegraves], which is on the Mendips not far from Glastonbury?

I do *not* want to be sensational (which the Planchette 'chalice' might lead one to be), so I will not suggest that this relic was the

<sup>1</sup> Avalon, in Welsh mythology, the 'Kingdom of the Dead,' afterwards an earthly paradise in the western seas, and, finally, the abode of heroes to which King Arthur was conveyed after his last battle. The name 'Isle of Avalon' was given to the low ridge in Central Somersetshire which culminates in Glastonbury Tor, while Glastonbury itself came to be called Avalon.—H. P.

Grail!<sup>1</sup> But it does seem to me that here is a clue worth following up. Who knows? That too may have gone down the well and be waiting for you!

The Canon's last remark was prophetic. We did *not* find the chalice or the Holy Grail, but we *did* find in the round well a Sheffield-plate cream-jug (Plate XVI)! Is this still another 'indicator' pointing to—what? As the Canon remarks in another letter, it is a fascinating business!

I am sure that my readers are grateful—as I am—for all the time, ingenuity, skill, and work that Canon Phythian-Adams has devoted to the Borley case. His discoveries and suggestions have proved invaluable, and it is due to these that I ultimately decided to arrange for the excavating of the cellar wells at Borley Rectory. What we found there will emerge later.

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Grail is the famous talisman of Arthurian romance, the object of quest on the part of the Knights of the Round Table. In Sir Thomas Malory's translation of the French *Quête du Saint Graal*, it is the cup or chalice of the Last Supper, in which the blood which flowed from the wounds of the crucified Saviour has been miraculously preserved.—H. P.

## DECIPHERING THE MARIANNE APPEALS

ALLEGED paranormal wall-writing by psychic 'entities' occurs very rarely in houses haunted by either ghosts or Poltergeists, but this phenomenon at Borley Rectory was not unique. In the Poltergeist infestation at Amherst, Nova Scotia, in 1878-79, Esther Cox, the young girl 'medium' or centre of attraction, was threatened several times in 'messages.' One of these, scribbled on the bedroom wall, read: 'Esther Cox, you are mine to kill!' It nearly frightened the life out of her.<sup>1</sup> In a case at Battersea that I investigated in 1928 a house was infested by another Poltergeist, and slips of paper, bearing 'messages,' were found scattered about the rooms. One of these read: 'I am having a bad time here. I cannot rest. I was born during the reign of William the Conqueror. Tom Blood.' Others were signed 'Jessie Blood.' A full description of the case can be found in my book<sup>2</sup> on Poltergeists. The Berkeley Square ghost is alleged also to have written on walls.<sup>3</sup>

For a full account of the Borley wall-messages, the reader should consult my previous monograph,<sup>4</sup> where the writings are analysed and discussed in detail. The messages were all of a pathetic nature, with 'Help, Mass, Prayers, and Incense' as the main theme. All have a Roman Catholic flavour; all were addressed to 'Marianne' (*i.e.*, Mrs Foyster); and all appeared during the incumbency of the Rev. L. A. Foyster, who mentions the appeals in his diary. Under date of May 1931, he records messages, 'written in a childish hand,' addressed to Marianne. None, apparently, was signed. Though the wall-writings were in existence during my tenancy of the Rectory, when they were

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the 'Great Amherst Mystery' see *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229-239.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 144-152.

photographed, I never saw any of the messages that were written on paper.<sup>1</sup> Where the principal appeals appeared can be seen from the plans of the Rectory, included in this volume.

Although no 'messages' were written during my lease of the Rectory, many new pencil-markings were noted by my observers —some of them appearing spontaneously in their presence. And though we received no messages on the *walls*, the Glanville family and their friends recorded many of these pathetic appeals via the Planchette and the tipping table, as the reader knows. They are all in the same vein: 'Light, Mass, Prayers,' etc.

We have seen how the skill of Dr Phythian-Adams has made sense out of the principal writings, and how his discovery of the words 'trompée,' etc., is confirmation of 'Mary Lairre's' own Planchette assertion that she was French. Other correspondents' attempts to disentangle the cryptic appeals may be of interest to the reader, and I now propose to submit a few of them. The photographs of the writings, reproduced herewith, should be carefully studied.

The Rev. F. A. Heaton, of St Michael's Vicarage, Tenterden, Kent, sends me (January 25, 1941) some interesting suggestions. He says:

What I would like to suggest to you is concerning the writings. . . . They strike me as being written by some one either (a) when they were not looking at what they were doing; or (b) in the *dark*. The reason is the way the letters are all joined in one continuous line, as if the person could not take the pencil off lest they should put it down to continue in the wrong place. If I could really believe that unhappy spirits could make their needs known, I should imagine that some one was imprisoned 'in the dark,' and perhaps died there. Hence the crying for 'light.' In the picture opposite p. 152 [the 'well-tank' and 'trompée' messages], the writer could *not* see and did get muddled, hence the writing over writing. By the way, the one you read as 'Marianne-at-Get-Help-entant-Bottom-Me', I could imagine to be '... Bottom-We.' That is, the bottom well. The line of the *e*, leading up like it does, suggests another letter to follow. The message below I could imagine really is 'and open,' not 'and O.' And the odd marks on p. 147, *when turned*

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written a 'paper message' has been sent me. (See Chapter XXII and Plate XXVI.)

TRACING OF A PENCILLED WALL-MESSAGE THAT APPEARED  
NEAR THE 'BLUE ROOM' DURING THE PRESENCE OF  
MRS FOYSTER AND DOM RICHARD WHITEHOUSE, O.S.B.,  
JUNE 16, 1931

*upside down*, are very near looking like 'light' again. And the bottom word of all reminds me very much of ancient script, with the delight they seemed to take in 'flourishes.' There is no such usage as 'light Mass,' though there is, of course, 'low Mass.'

Mr Heaton's remark about the inverted word 'light' refers to the 'message' that appeared near the Blue Room on June 16, 1931. A tracing of this message is reproduced at p. 197 here-with. The word is immediately below 'Here.' If the reader turns the page upside down he will see that the 'odd marks' *do* resemble 'light.'

Mr H. E. Adshead, J.P., B.A., of Beslyns, Great Bardfield, Braintree, Essex, also thought that the 'odd marks' were the inverted word 'light.'

Canon A. W. Stote-Blandy, Vicar of Colehill and Canon of Sarum, writing from Wimborne, Dorset, also draws my attention to the 'odd marks' referred to by Mr Heaton. He thinks that they *may* stand for 'Finis.' He continues (January 27, 1941): 'But beneath this, and between the horizontal lines, I think I can read "Mas[Mass]" "by self," which seems to make sense if Mary Lairre felt the need of a Mass for her own repose!'

Miss Camilla Doyle, a draughtsman, of 46 The Close, Norwich, also writes (April 2, 1941) to say that she has interpreted the 'Well-Tank-Bottom-Me' message (just as Canon Phythian-Adams did a couple of months previously), and sends me an excellent tracing (reproduced) of it.

#### NEW INTERPRETATION OF A MARIANNE 'MESSAGE'

Mr H. E. Beal, of St Peter's Hill, Caversham, Berks, is certain (May 7, 1941) that the bottom line of the 'odd marks' message, referred to by Mr Heaton (see tracing at p. 197), is in Devanagari (manuscript, not printed) characters, one of the Indo-Aryan

languages, and that a competent Sanskrit scholar could decipher them. So far I have been unable to find one who can understand the symbols. Perhaps one of my readers will oblige.

Emeritus Professor W. B. Stevenson, D.Litt., D.D., LL.D., etc., writing from 31 Mansionhouse Road, Edinburgh, sends me (September 9, 1941) some interesting suggestions concerning the wall-writings. He says that he does not know the expression ‘light Mass,’ and supposes that ‘light,’ ‘Mass,’ and ‘prayers’ are separate items. The ‘light’ might be for a search somewhere, or might be figurative. In the principal message (Plate IX), between the words ‘Marianne’ and ‘Get help,’ he detects two crosses. He, too, discovered the ‘Well-Tank-Bottom-Me’ interpretation in this appeal. In the ‘odd marks’ message (p. 197), Professor Stevenson suggests that the top line might read: ‘Get-Light-Mass-R.B.-Prayers,’ the ‘R.B.’ (meaning Roman Breviary) taking the place of my ‘and.’ It would thus mean, ‘Roman Breviary Prayers,’ not ‘and prayers.’ The Professor draws attention to the fact that ‘It is perhaps significant that all the messages occur at one side of the house, within reach of a common centre.’ The ‘Prince of Wales’s Feathers’ markings<sup>1</sup> that appeared during the actual presence of Mr M. Savage, a B.B.C. television engineer, may be, says Professor Stevenson, an attempt to represent a *fleur de lis*—emphasizing the French nationality of the communicator.

Mr Edward P. Smith, of Rysings, Stone-in-Oxney, Tenterden, Kent, has some novel suggestions to make. He says (July 30, 1941):

Two points impress me: (a) You speak of the pencilings as being ‘left-handed.’ To me they suggest, most forcibly, writing which is the result of somebody or something using the pencil (or whatever was employed) *between the teeth*. I knew a man once who lost the use of his arms and wrote with a pencil or paint-brush which he held between his teeth. The resultant writing was *extraordinarily* like the ‘spiritual’ script as photographed and reproduced in your book. (b) On p. 147 you reproduce a ‘message’ [see tracing, p. 197] which appeared near the Blue Room on June 16, 1931. You regard it as reading, ‘Get-Light-Mass-and-Prayers-Here,’ followed

<sup>1</sup> See p. 217.

by an undecipherable scribble. To me the remainder of the 'message' is relatively plain. First comes what I take to be a signature 'Sibil'—the *l* being formed like the Greek  $\lambda$ . Then follows, as it were in the form of a postscript, the words 'Mas by Boy.' It seems as though the whole 'message' were meant to read: 'Get-Light-Mass-and-Prayers-Here-Sibil-Mas(s)-by-Boy.' Superficially, it makes no more sense. But there may be some significance which attaches to the name 'Sibil' (or 'Sybil'), and particularly to what I call the postscript, 'Mas(s)-by-Boy,' and which is not apparent to the casual reader.

I congratulated Mr Smith upon his ingenuity. The reader now has the choice of interpreting the 'odd marks' as 'light' upside down; or as 'Finis'; or as 'Sibil.'

Mrs C. H. B. Gowan, to whom I referred in an earlier chapter, thinks that the message (Plate IX) reading 'Marianne-Please-help-get' is uncompleted. It certainly ends with a scrawl and looks as if the writer had been forcibly pulled away just as she was beginning the last word. If so, then Mrs Gowan thinks the message should read: 'Marianne, please help! Get....'

Mr G. S. Taylor, of Portobello Farm, Watlington, Oxon, also gets the 'Well-Tank-Bottom-Me' rendering, and makes the following very interesting observation. He says (February 16, 1942): 'Having read your book with attention, I note that one of the pencilled "Ma" messages was written on the wall close to the well, and that the "scratch" described on p. 223 was close to it. I should very much like to know in which direction that arrow pointed!'

The 'Ma' to which Mr Taylor refers is reproduced at p. 145 of my book, and was found on the wall of the kitchen passage. (See Ground Floor Plan, on which the letters are marked No. 5.) At p. 223 of my book I record that on the morning of July 19, 1937, the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr Kerr-Pearse, after locking all the doors of the Rectory, went by car to Sudbury, where they stayed an hour or so. When they returned (at 12.5 P.M.) they again inspected all rooms and passages and, quoting the official report, 'discovered a deep scratch or incision on the ground-floor passage wall near the pencilled "Ma" discovered by Kerr-Pearse [previously].' The scratch, which was

*not* there at 9 A.M., *was* there three hours later, though the Rectory was securely locked up, and normal entry was impossible. The report continues: 'The mark was in the form of an arrow-shaft and its head.'

I remember the arrow well, and it was pointing *downward* to the *left*. To the left of the 'Ma' marking were the stairs leading to the cellars, and at the bottom of these stairs was the shallow tank or 'well' ('well-tank'), under which, almost exactly six years later, were found the fragments of human remains. (See Cellar Plan.) So the arrow might have had some significance, as Mr Taylor suggests. In fact, literally a 'pointer' or clue.

Miss E. M. Smith, of St Clement's House, Bolsover Street, London, W.1, thinks, with Mr Heaton, that in the 'odd marks' message (see p. 197), the second line from the bottom is the inverted word 'light.' And she says (December 11, 1942): 'the bottom line of this script is a misspelt version of "Mas(s)-by-AB(b)ey.'" Miss Smith's rendering approximates to her namesake's 'Mas(s)-by-Boy' (see above), except that the word 'abbey' suggests the monastic site on which the Rectory is alleged to have been built. It also suggests the 'monk and nun' legend.

The Rev. Dr W. G. Peck, and his son, the Rev. David G. Peck, B.A., of 45 Castelnau Mansions, London, S.W.13, in discussing the wall-writings, write (September 22, 1943):

We think the wall-writings, if the possibility of fraud (conscious or unconscious) may be finally excluded, are extremely important, for it seems difficult to account for them on any less hypothesis than that some conscious and volitional psychic entity was responsible for their production. And although the 'messages' occurred only when Mrs Foyster was living at the Rectory, a mark of any sort, made apparently by no visible agency, while the house was being investigated in a thoroughly scientific manner, is a sufficient problem. . . . The two instances of the message being confused by words superimposed on other words: does this suggest the possibility of a person writing surreptitiously, not looking at what he or she was doing, but perhaps keeping a look-out against an unwanted interruptor (or working in darkness)? Of course, assuming a 'psychic entity' at work, we may suppose that the difficulty of the operation might be fairly held to account for such confusions in the script.

I agree, and as for a 'normal' explanation of the writings, were we to discard from our calculations every one of the 'messages' there would still remain all the markings that appeared during the visits of our many official observers. Some of these marks (e.g., the 'Prince of Wales's feathers' [or *fleur-de-lis*<sup>1</sup>]) spontaneously appeared under controlled conditions, in the presence of the investigators. And if the messages were produced normally there was certainly no need to write them surreptitiously. The Rectory was such a huge barn of a place, and, latterly, was never occupied at any one time by more than two or three (usually two) persons, that an occupant of the house could have covered the walls with writing at his or her leisure without any other occupant being aware of the fact and without being disturbed. And often, owing to the normal domestic and parochial duties of such a household, there must have been long periods when one of the occupants was quite alone in the house. Our hypothetical normal writer, therefore, would have had no need to act either surreptitiously or in darkness. And as Professor Stevenson points out (above), all the writings were on one side of the house—the most occupied and most frequented side; the side where the messages would attract the most (and earliest) attention—and, if the messages were produced normally, the side most dangerous to the writer on account of possible interruption and detection. But if produced by a 'psychic entity,' who wanted to attract immediate attention, the most frequented side of the house is, of course, where they would appear.

My last letter (out of many I could cite) is from Mr Derek M. Hall (whom I have quoted previously), who says: 'Would it be possible to make a "pencil" which, while leaving no visible mark at the time of writing, would produce a mark after some lapse of time, due to the oxidizing or other chemical process?'

Such a pencil could be made, but the writing would not have the appearance of lead-pencil writing. I analysed tiny portions of the wordings and, under microscopical examination, proved that the 'lead' used was plumbago, or graphite, of which the ordinary lead-pencils of commerce (and the domestic black lead)

<sup>1</sup> See p. 217.

are made. I noted that both 'hard' and 'soft' pencils had been used, the different grains being quite apparent.

Well, the reader can amuse himself by discovering further interpretations or variants of the 'appeals,' and I am most grateful to all my correspondents who have sent me such interesting and revealing suggestions: It is not their fault that the mystery of the wall-writings has not been completely solved. Whoever, or whatever, wrote them could not have visualized that, sixteen years later, psychical researchers would still be puzzling their heads about them!

CHAPTER XII  
THE WALDEGRAVES

THE Waldegraves, an influential Roman Catholic family, were intimately connected with Borley for some three hundred years, during which period they were patrons of the church and held the Manor of Borley. A descendant of Sir Richard Waldegrave (who died in 1402) was Sir Edward Waldegrave, the first<sup>1</sup> member of this family actively connected with Borley. He was imprisoned during the reign of Edward VI for his loyalty to the princess, afterwards Queen Mary, and he received from her the Manor of Chewton, in Somersetshire. Chewton Priory, Bath, is the present seat of the Waldegrave family.

Sir Edward Waldegrave (c. 1517-61) was Member of Parliament for Essex and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He was knighted at the Coronation of Queen Mary in 1553. After Mary's death he suffered a reverse of fortune, and he was a prisoner in the Tower of London (his crime was permitting the saying of a Mass at Borley), where he died on September 1, 1561. He married Frances (who died in 1599), daughter of Sir Edward Neville, and had three sons and three daughters. His wife survived him for thirty-eight years, taking for her second husband Chedick Paulet, third son of William Paulet, first Marquis of Winchester. He was Governor of Southampton. The Paulet arms can be seen on the Waldegrave tomb.

Sir Edward Waldegrave, his wife, and their six children are depicted on the very ornate tomb at the north-east corner of the nave in Borley Church. As, thanks to the skill of Mr David E. Scherman (the photographer on the staff of *Life*, the American weekly), I am able to reproduce (Plate VI) such an excellent picture of the Waldegrave monument, I will describe it in some detail.

<sup>1</sup> But see the Rev. Francis G. S. Nicolle's letter, pp. 205-206.

This altar-tomb, fourteen feet high, is made of clunch (*i.e.*, indurated clay or hard chalk), with painted recumbent effigies of Sir Edward and Frances. The man is in plate armour and ruff, the woman in flat cap and large ruff, with crests at the feet of both effigies. The tomb has panelled sides, with the kneeling figures of their three sons and three daughters, each with an inscription and coat of arms. The canopy of the tomb has a coffered soffit, resting on six Corinthian columns. The cornice is surmounted by cresting and achievement of arms, and a shield of arms. At angles, there are figures of cherubs holding cartouches of arms. The monument has a marginal inscription in Latin and a record of other alliances of the family. It is an outstanding example of sixteenth-century work and appears to be in perfect condition.

On the north wall of the chancel is a painted tablet of Magdala Waldegrave (third daughter of Sir Edward), wife of John Southcote, which was put up to her memory after her death in 1598. She is shown kneeling in prayer, wearing a flat head-dress and ruff, with tight-fitting bodice and loose skirt, and a sleeveless mantle over her shoulders. The monument is flanked by Ionic columns, with a shield of arms above cornice.<sup>1</sup>

The Rev. Francis G. S. Nicolle, Vicar of St Thomas's, Bethnal Green, in a letter to me dated October 18, 1942, says:

I have come across a piece of information which may be of sufficient interest to pass on to you. It would seem that Sir Edward Waldegrave was not, after all, the first of that family to be associated with Borley, but his grandfather, also named Edward. This is how the story works out: Sir Thomas (great-grandson of Sir Richard, the Speaker of the House of Commons) married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Sir John Fray, and died in 1500. He was succeeded by William, the eldest of his three sons. The second son, Edward (ancestor of the present family), had settled at Borley, in Essex, and married Elizabeth, daughter of John Chayney, of Devon. He too died in 1500, and was succeeded by his only son, John Waldegrave, who married Lora, daughter of Sir John Rochester, who died in 1514. Sir Edward, who married Frances, daughter of

<sup>1</sup> For a description of Borley Church and its monuments, see *A Short History of Borley and Liston Churches*, by J. M. Bull (1937).

Sir Edward Neville, and died in the Tower under Elizabeth in 1561, was the eldest son of this marriage.

It is highly probable that the bodies of the Waldegraves, depicted on the tomb, were interred at Borley. There is a crypt under Borley Church, and our efforts to find it will be described in another chapter. As I recorded at p. 50 of my previous monograph on the Borley case, Miss Ethel Bull informed us that, many years previously, coffins in the crypt had been paranormally moved—as in the classic case of the ‘haunted vault’ at Christ Church, Barbados.<sup>1</sup> It is presumed that the coffins were those of the Waldegrave family. From time to time phenomena in Borley Church have been recorded.

Sir Edward’s second son, Nicholas, inherited the Borley property. Mrs Georgina Dawson says:

Nicholas Waldegrave, the second son, sometimes called Sir Nicholas, but I am not certain that this is correct. He inherited Borley, and from him all the later Borley Waldegraves are descended. Nicholas must have been born between 1550 and 1561, when his father died, and he himself died on June 19, 1621, possessed of the Manor of Borley Hall, ten acres (probably woodland) in Bulmer, and some unspecified share in the church and Manor of Langenhoo. . . . Nicholas’s eldest son, Philip Waldegrave, married twice. . . . His eldest son John by the first wife appears to have had only the one son, Philip, who is listed as a recusant in 1715, and on whose death the Borley Waldegraves came to an end, and the estates passed to James, Lord Waldegrave.

He was later made an earl. Philip Waldegrave died in 1720-21.

The Waldegraves lived at Borley Hall, on the river Stour, built in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is marked on modern Ordnance Survey maps,<sup>2</sup> and has long been occupied by the Payne family. Borley Manor house (now called Borley Place) is the old house nearly opposite the Rectory, and is the residence of Mr Basil Payne. In the cellars are considerable remains of a much earlier building, and associated with it is the familiar story of a ‘secret tunnel.’ Ancient maps of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 316-320.

<sup>2</sup> Essex [New Series] Sheet N XI. 5; Suffolk [West] Sheet LXXII. 11. 14. 15 (Parts of).

district show only two houses at Borley—the 'Hall' and the 'Place.'

As for Borley Rectory, it is certain that earlier buildings have been erected on the site. The Herringham family had a rectory there, and there are memorials to them in Borley Church. In my previous monograph I assumed that the Waldegraves also had a house where the Rectory now stands—or, rather, stood. I was wrong. But it is possible—even likely—that the Waldegraves had a chaplain's house on the site. It is certain that there *was* a rectory at Borley in the sixteenth century, with a high degree of probability that it was built opposite the church, where our 'haunted house' stood. During our investigations we discovered the footings or foundations of an ancient building in the cellars of the Rectory. It had been constructed of the old two-inch bricks.

Concerning the 'monastery' tradition, it is very unlikely that such a foundation ever existed at Borley. But just across the river Stour, that here forms the boundary between Essex and Suffolk, there *was* a Priory. Mrs Dawson says:

But though there was no monastery, etc., actually on the site of the present Rectory, there was a Priory near Borley, whose lands probably adjoined Borley, and as the Priory was Benedictine, and the land at Borley owned by the Benedictines, this must be the explanation of the tradition of 'Borley Monastery.' But so far as can be discovered, the only link between the Benedictine Priory and Borley was that the Benedictine Order had 'Free Warren' at Borley, and the later connexion of the Waldegraves with the Benedictines would further confuse the matter.

The ruins of the Priory are still extant.

We need not have concerned ourselves with the Waldegraves at all, except for two reasons: (a) the fact that the name 'Waldegrave' was recurrent in the Planchette scripts, with the implication—even the assertion—that a member of this family (whose name was later given as 'Henry') strangled 'Mary Lairre,' the nun-ghost, in 1667; and (b) for the theory evolved by Mrs Georgina Dawson, of Leavenheath, near Colchester, that the nun-ghost was Arabella Waldegrave.

As for 'Henry Waldegrave,' we know two members of the family whose Christian name was 'Henry,' and neither could have been concerned with 'Mary Lairre,' if she died in 1667. One 'Henry' is the first Lord Waldegrave, created a peer by James II. Of course he was a Roman Catholic, and he died in exile in 1689, when a member of King James's suite. He was born in 1660, and was created Baron Waldegrave of Chewton in 1686. He married Henrietta FitzJames (1670-1730), the natural daughter of James II and Arabella Churchill. Their sons were James, first Earl Waldegrave (1684-1741), and Henry Waldegrave (our second 'Henry'), who died a bachelor in 1792. Their daughter was Arabella Waldegrave, of whom more anon. Mr Winston Churchill is a collateral descendant of this family.

So it is apparent that in 1667 our first Henry was only seven years old, and his son, Henry, was not even born. But the records of the Waldegrave family are both confused and confusing, and there may have been other 'Henrys' who flourished at about the time that 'Mary Lairre' did. If there were I have not come across them. Anyway, it would be unwise to depend on the Planchette scripts for the name of 'Mary's' strangler.

#### ARABELLA WALDEGRAVE

On April 23, 1943, I had a letter from Mrs Dawson (who was a stranger to me), asking for particulars of the clothing of the 'nun' alleged to haunt Borley Rectory. She told me that she had been doing some research work into the history of Borley, 'and what caused such powerful effects there.' She remarked that 'My inquiries are not yet complete, but I feel I am on the right lines and that the lady [the nun-ghost] was Arabella Waldegrave, born in 1687, daughter of Henry, first Lord Waldegrave and Henrietta FitzJames, and a grandchild of King James II.'

This remarkable information was of the greatest interest, as it tended to demolish, at one blow, our theory (based on the Planchette records) that the 'nun' might be a French girl named Mary Lairre. Mrs Dawson kindly offered to let me have her

notes accumulated during the research work, and these duly arrived on June 12, 1943.

Her typed 'notes' turned out to be a *dossier* of Borley, the church, the many Rectors dating from 1313, the Rectory, the 'castle,' the 'monastery,' and the Waldegraves, running to 20,000 words! She has done a really magnificent piece of research work, and a history of Borley could be compiled from her records. She had no absolute *proof* that Arabella was the Borley nun-ghost—but she *did* prove that, after tracing her early history, the girl vanished into thin air—without trace. This would be remarkable enough in such a distinguished family as the Waldegraves, whose contemporary records are available. But that a king's grandchild should so disappear is in the nature of a phenomenon. But that Arabella *did* disappear seems certain.

Briefly, Mrs Dawson's story is this. During the period of the fight for the Protestant succession James II and his Court fled to Paris. This was in 1688. The Waldegraves, being staunch Catholics, went with them—so did little Arabella, then aged one year. Arabella's early girlhood was spent with the Court at Saint-Germain, and at the age of seven she was sent to the convent school of the Benedictines at Pontoise, near Paris, where her aunt and cousin were nuns (some fifteen members of the Waldegrave family professed and became nuns.) Arabella's name is mentioned several times in the convent's archives. Apparently, Arabella was a naughty girl, and she left—or was dismissed from—Pontoise. According to Foley's *Records*, she went to Paris and became a nun. And that is the last we hear of her. Every other member of the Waldegrave family has been accounted for, but not Arabella. It was as if the earth had swallowed her up.

The above are all the *facts* I possess about Arabella. But from Mrs Dawson's researches, it has been assumed that the girl eventually became a spy or agent for the Stuart Pretenders, or perhaps for the British Government in London. And there is also a theory that Arabella finally found her way to Borley, where, perhaps, she was murdered. Hence the 'nun-ghost.' Mrs Dawson may have further evidence supporting this contention;

but if so I have not seen it. I understand that she is publishing the full story of her discoveries. It will be read with the greatest interest.

During her researches Mrs Dawson discovered that Arabella's mother, Henrietta Waldegrave, *did* become a spy for the British Government and was expelled from Paris in 1695. She was sent to a convent, escaped, and returned to England to oppose the Stuart Pretenders.

It must have been fairly easy for any member of the Waldegrave family to escape to—or from—the Continent, as, in addition to being the lords of the Manor of Borley, they also owned Langenhoo, a lonely spot on the Essex marshes, not very far from Borley, and near the sea. And the Rector of Borley was also Rector of Langenhoo, an ideal place for the smuggling over of priests—or recusant nuns! Arabella's mother, Henrietta, died in 1730. Her grandmother also died in 1730, aged about eighty.

If our information about Arabella is so scanty we know a little more about her grandmother, and I cannot resist giving Lord Macaulay's remarks concerning her. He says:<sup>1</sup>

1685. Soon after the Restoration, in the gay and dissolute times which have been celebrated by the lively pen of Hamilton,<sup>2</sup> James, young and ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, had been attracted by Arabella Churchill, one of the maids of honour who waited on his first wife. The young lady was plain: but the taste of James was not nice: and she became his avowed mistress. She was the daughter of a poor Cavalier knight who haunted Whitehall, and made himself ridiculous by publishing a dull and affected folio, long forgotten, in praise of monarchy and monarchs. The necessities of the Churchills were pressing: their loyalty was ardent; and their only feeling about Arabella's seduction seems to have been joyful surprise that so homely a girl should have attained such high preferment.

Such is the reward of virtue! Arabella Churchill's brother, John Churchill, became the first Duke of Marlborough.

Well, I am grateful to Mrs Dawson for her records, which Canon Phythian-Adams too has perused with much interest. So

<sup>1</sup> *Macaulay's History of England*, edited by C. H. Firth (London, 1913), vol. i, p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Hamilton (1646–1720).—H. P.

now we have two claimants (there are others; see Chapter XXII) to the honour of haunting Borley Rectory: 'Mary Lairre' and Arabella Waldegrave. As I have stated, I have seen no proofs that the latter ever visited Borley, either in the flesh or in the spirit. On the other hand, we have a few clues or 'indicators'—for what they are worth—pointing to 'Mary Lairre' as the nun-ghost, and these I will enumerate in the next chapter. What Canon Phythian-Adams thinks of the Arabella-nun-ghost theory, and his observations, will be found in Chapter XV.

I cannot close this chapter without mentioning that Borley Rectory is not the only alleged haunted house that has been associated with the Waldegrave family. Strawberry Hill, near Teddington, is another.

Strawberry Hill was purchased by Horace Walpole in 1748. He converted an old cottage into a castellated pseudo-florid-Gothic monstrosity, very flimsy, little better than lath and plaster (Walpole boasted that he had 'outlived three sets of battlements'), and turned it into a sort of museum. He filled it with artistic treasures which were dispersed in 1842. At his death in 1797 he bequeathed the property to the Hon. Mrs Anne Damer, the sculptress, the reversion of the house to pass at her death to the Dowager Countess of Waldegrave. Actually, Mrs Damer parted with it before she died, and the Waldegraves came into possession. I do not know the details of the alleged haunting. The house has, of course, been much altered since the time of Walpole, who here wrote his romantic *Castle of Otranto* (1764), and the still more famous *Letters*. It was here, too, that Walpole established his private 'Strawberry Hill Press' in August 1757.

## CLUES AND 'INDICATORS'

**A**S I have stated in a previous chapter, when my original monograph on Borley was completed my collaborators and I thought that our work was done. The Rectory fire seemed to put 'Finis' to our endeavours.

Then came Canon Phythian-Adams's skilful analysis of the wall-writings, his many helpful suggestions, and, above all, his ingenious—and logical—theory as to the probable causation of the Borley drama. He told us to *dig*. He also discovered certain clues and 'indicators' that pointed to the possibility of there being something buried in the cellar which, if dug up, might confirm the conclusions at which we had tentatively arrived.

Several years have elapsed since I received Canon Phythian-Adams's analysis, and during this period I have been carefully studying all the possible *indicia* that might help us further. I will now list them. These discriminating marks and indications have been extracted from the wall-writings (visible); the spoken 'messages' (audible); the 'touchings' (tactual); from various phenomena recorded by my observers; and, especially, from the Planchette scripts and table-tipping information. The reader will agree that, in the aggregate, these clues are impressive—so impressive, in fact, that on the strength of them and Canon Phythian-Adams's theory we decided to open up the two cellar wells in an attempt to find the remains of 'Mary Lairre.'

First of all, there is every indication that the nun was *French*. She tells us she is French; that her name is 'Mary Lairre' (one Planchette signature was *Marie Lairre*), a French name; and that she came from Havre. It has been objected that she writes (Planchette) 'Havre' and not 'Le Havre.' But the definite article 'Le' is frequently omitted. As I write, I have a Continental time-table (1938-39) before me, and in the index 'Havre' is printed *without* 'Le.'

Then we have the two French medallions that 'appeared' during Mr Smith's incumbency: a Roman Catholic pendant, as issued to French children when they are confirmed. It was made in Paris, but was found at Borley in 1929. With it came another medal, dated 1799, issued in Paris during the French Revolution. A small gold French pendant was found under the cellar floor, and I will describe this in the next chapter.

As Canon Phythian-Adams points out (p. 266), it was 'a big French dictionary' that bumped to the floor, as Mr P. Shaw Jeffrey lay in bed during one of his visits to the Rectory in 1885. His bedroom door was locked and the windows closed. The dictionary may have been another 'indicator' pointing to Mary Lairre's French extraction. And the construction of the wall 'appeals' was such as a French girl, with an imperfect knowledge of English, might have written.

If Mary Lairre was French it is certain that she was a Catholic. The many appeals for help have a Roman Catholic flavour. The repeated calls for Requiem Mass, prayers, incense, and light all suggest a young Catholic girl in distress. Assuming that Mary was in any way responsible for the more violent phenomena, it is significant that—as Mr Foyster records in his diary—'there was absolute quiet during Holy Week' and usually on Sundays.

In November 1938 Flight-Lieutenants Caunter and R. Carter Jonas paid an unexpected visit to the Rectory. My tenancy had expired some months previously. The house was empty and no one had been there for weeks. They stayed one night only. Reporting their visit, Carter Jonas wrote me: 'There was an *overpowering smell of incense* in one of the rooms.'<sup>1</sup> Incense is again suggestive of the Roman Catholic faith, and may be another indicator.

Still another significant fact is that it was a priest, Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., who received such a direct appeal in the wall message which appeared on June 16, 1931, near the Blue Room (see p. 197). He was a priest of the Order of St Benedict, an Order frequently referred to in the Planchette scripts, and an Order long connected with Borley. And it was

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 232-233.

Dom Richard who experienced the amazing physical phenomena at the Rectory during May and June 1931. Another priest, the Rev. A. C. Henning, received the name 'Mary Lairre' in a Planchette message.

Another possible 'indicator' is the pile of hymn-books that 'appeared' at the Rectory during Mr Foyster's incumbency. They were Anglican—and not Roman Catholic—hymn-books, but they were perhaps all part of the religious *motif* that is so apparent in the Borley drama.

'Mary Lairre' was a woman. Of course, we have her statement for that in the Planchette scripts. But there are other *indicia* that point to the fact that the unquiet spirit at Borley was a woman.

It was to two sympathetic young women that 'Mary' addressed most of her appeals. These were Mrs Foyster and Miss Helen Glanville. If it were indeed a fact that the Rectory was haunted by the phantasm of a girl it would be natural that if it needed help it should seek out young people of its own sex. Another woman, Lady Whitehouse, experienced striking phenomena during her visits to the Rectory.

The 'strange coat'—a *woman's* coat—that mysteriously appeared and disappeared at the Rectory may have been another 'indicator' drawing attention to the fact that a *woman* needed help.

#### A TACTUAL CLUE

Mrs F. A. Mansbridge, wife of a Bank of England official, while standing by the 'cold spot' outside the Blue Room, was touched by something. Her husband records: 'September 5, 1937: *My wife felt the end of the belt of her coat lifted and dropped again.* The movement was so definite as to make her look down at it.' This action suggests that a feminine entity was trying to attract the attention of a human of her own sex. It was a woman's gesture.

It was in the sewing-room (see Plan II), a woman's room, that so many phenomena occurred, from the early days of the haunting right down to the period of the Cambridge Commission. It was *outside* the sewing-room, in the passage, that two 'wall-appeals' appeared.



PLATE X. BY THE BURNT-OUT 'BLUE ROOM'

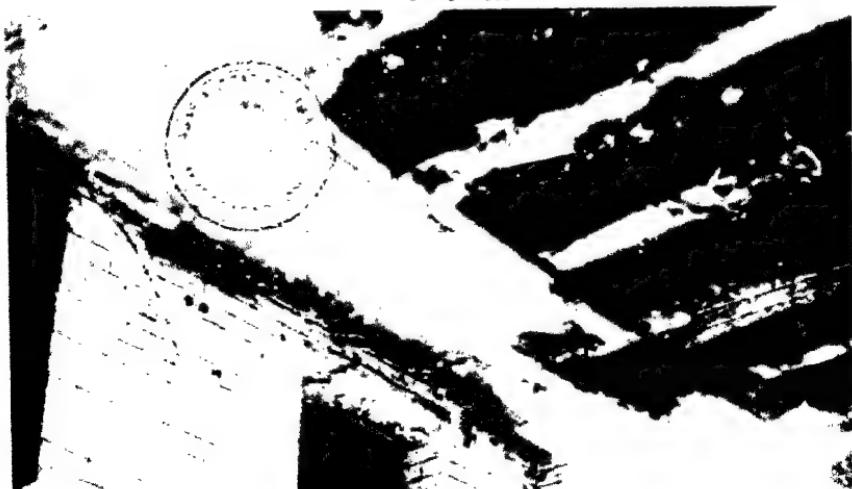
The 'cold spot' is in the centre of the plank bridge. Photographed January 5, 1944.

[See p. 235]

PLATE XI. A WINDOW IN THE RECTORY CELLARS, AND CHARRED BEAMS  
SUPPORTING THE HALL FLOOR

Photographed January 5, 1944.

[See p. 235]



1

It was *in* the sewing-room that Mr Kerr-Pearse found a lump of touchwood, in the grate, on July 18, 1937. It spontaneously appeared and is still the subject of much speculation.

The two gold wedding-rings found at the Rectory point to a woman, to a marriage, and perhaps to a tragic marriage. Or perhaps to the fact that there was *no* marriage! One was discovered by Mrs Foyster in her bathroom on March 10, 1931. It disappeared on the following day. The other—perhaps the same one—Mr Motion and I picked up in the Blue Room on the last day of my tenancy. This was on May 9, 1938.

'Marie Lairre' was a nun. She tells us so in the Planchette scripts. But we have other evidence—if it be evidence. Practically all the 'figures,' phantasms, and ghosts seen during the past sixty years have been in the form of a nun. She has been seen by many people. We have the first-hand evidence of at least fifteen witnesses that the nun has been seen. Some of the observers saw her several times. Miss Rosemary Williams saw a 'girl in white' at the window aperture of the burnt-out Blue Room on March 26, 1939. This too may have been the nun.

Then there are the French Catholic medallions or pendants, such as a nun might wear. These are perhaps only indicators pointing to a nun, and to a French nun.

I will now deal with the more direct clues that support the theory that a French nun named Marie Lairre needed help; that she was murdered at Borley by a young Waldegrave; and that her remains might be found in the cellar. I will first take the wall-writings.

### VISIBLE CLUES

As I have pointed out, one of the most striking clues we have discovered is the French word

'Trompée.'

This, perhaps, was a desperate attempt to convey to us that the writer was French and that she had been 'deceived.' In the Planchette script she says she was strangled 'by a Waldegrave.'

Then we have a clue to where she might be found:

'Well—Tank—Bottom—Me.'

I think that the skull (history unknown) that Mrs Smith found in the cupboard of the Rectory library is a possible indicator suggesting that a skull, or remains, could be found *somewhere*—if we searched for them. The fact that we *did* find a fragment of a skull in the 'well-tank,' or where it used to be, is perhaps some confirmation for this suggestion.

#### 'MA' AND POINTING ARROW

As Mr Taylor pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the arrow that was afterwards found close to the letters 'Ma' in the kitchen passage may be an indicator pointing to the 'well-tank.'

#### THE WALDEGRAVE CREST?

On May 7, 1938, Mr M. Savage, one of the B.B.C. television engineers, and a friend visited the Rectory. They witnessed new pencil markings that spontaneously appeared when they were within a yard of them. This was in the Blue Room. In Room No. 5, the dressing-room leading out of the Blue Room, they witnessed further markings that also appeared spontaneously. With his report,<sup>2</sup> Mr Savage sent a sketch of these marks, and in my book I commented upon the fact that they were rather like the 'Prince of Wales's feathers.' Professor Stevenson suggests<sup>3</sup> that perhaps the communicator was trying to draw the *fleur-de-lis*—again pointing to her French nationality.

The sketch—or rather sketches—that Mr Savage sent me consisted of a series of four sets of markings. (See reproduction.) Three of the sets were each composed of four strokes, representing the 'feathers,' and one set comprised *five* strokes.

When my book appeared Mr Edwyn R. Bevan, O.B.E., F.B.A., M.A., D.Litt., LL.D., the archaeologist, of Yatscombe Cottage, Boar's Hill, Oxford, drew my attention to the fact that the markings discovered by Mr Savage might have been an attempt at a representation of the Waldegrave crest. Mr Bevan happens to be a kinsman of the Waldegraves, and the similarity between what I called the 'Prince of Wales's feathers' and the Waldegrave crest at once occurred to him.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 220–222.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 199.

Mr Bevan pointed out (August 24, 1942) that the Prince of Wales's crest has *three* ostrich feathers rising out of the coronet, whereas the Waldegrave crest has *five*. As we have seen, Mr Savage's drawings depicted three sets of four 'feathers' and one of *five*. It certainly does appear as if the entity (Marie?) who drew them was trying to delineate the Waldegrave crest. The sketch with the five 'feathers' was at the bottom of the set of four drawings—which suggests it was the last attempt. They were about five feet from the floor. Can we regard these 'crests' as an indicator pointing to a Waldegrave?



### AUDIBLE CLUES

We have examined some possible visible clues to the Borley tragedy, and I will now list some audible ones.

### SIBILANT WHISPERINGS

The Rev. G. E. Smith and his wife had hardly moved into the Rectory when (at the latter part of 1928) Mr Smith heard 'distinct sibilant whisperings' on the landing near his bedroom. He was alone in the house. The whisperings were afterwards heard many times, and always in the same place. The sounds were curiously localized because Mr Smith had only to advance a few paces when they ceased. When he returned to the original spot the whispering could again be heard.

'PRINCE OF WALES'S FEATHERS'  
(OR THE WALDEGRAVES' CREST)  
THAT SPONTANEOUSLY APPEARED  
IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO OB-  
SERVERS

'DON'T, CARLOS, DON'T!'

One day, as Mr Smith was crossing this same landing, he heard a woman's voice exclaim, 'Don't, Carlos, don't!' The

appeal was preceded by a sort of moaning sound, and died away in a confused muttering. This particular voice was heard once only.

#### A CALL TO MARIANNE

The Smiths' first psychic experience at the Rectory was the hearing of the 'sibilant whisperings,' followed by the appeal to 'Carlos.' His successor's first experience was a similar one. On the day that Mr Foyster and his wife took up residence at the Rectory they both heard the name 'Marianne' called out. Marianne is Mrs Foyster's Christian name. This was the start of the Marianne appeals that afterwards appeared on walls and pieces of paper.

Is it not possible that 'Mary Lairre' was trying, vocally, to attract the attention of each new incumbent? The 'Carlos' appeal was very distinct. It is possible that a Charles Waldegrave was concerned in our hypothetical tragedy. 'Carlos' may have been the name by which Marie addressed him, or Mr Smith might have been deceived by Marie's pronunciation of 'Charles.' I cannot find a 'Charles' among the Waldegraves that fits into the picture as regards dates. Charles II (1630-85), second son of Charles I, fits in admirably. He was aged thirty-seven when the death of the alleged 'Marie Lairre' is said to have happened. It just occurs to me that what Mr Smith might have heard was not 'Carlos,' but 'Carolus.' Phonetically, of course, the names are similar. But I cannot imagine even a king being called 'Carolus' outside of State documents, and on coins and seals. Charles II must have known the Waldegraves well, and even, perhaps, on occasions, paid visits to their Manor at Borley. This 'Carolus' concept is far-fetched, but everything connected with Borley is, to put it mildly, unusual.

#### CHURCH MUSIC

Another possible audible clue is the choir-singing and organ music which, a number of villagers declare, have been heard in Borley Church when it was certain that the building contained neither worshippers nor choristers, and was securely locked. We have first-hand evidence. Mr Hardy, junior, happening to pass

the church at night, heard 'singing or chanting,' coming from the fabric, which was in complete darkness, empty, and locked. Was this still another indicator pointing, once more, to 'Requiem Mass'?

### PLANCHETTE AND TABLE MESSAGES

I now come to the most interesting—and perhaps most important—of all clues and indicators, I have already warned the reader that he must assess these messages at his own valuation. Taken in conjunction with all the other Borley phenomena, I think we can accept some of them. At least one of the predictions (and a very definite one) was fulfilled: I refer to the burning of the Rectory. Before we reach the end of this volume we shall find that other statements have been verified. I will deal with the messages and scripts in chronological order (*i.e.*, as received), beginning with those recorded in the 'locked book.' All the messages—Planchette and table-tipping—were received by the Glanville family and their friends. Most of the séances were held at the Glanvilles' home in Streatham; a few at Borley. It will be noted that most of the clues and indicators lead up—directly or indirectly—to the cellars and the well.

*October 24, 1937 (Borley).*—Much of this table-tipping séance dealt with the burial of the nun, who was alleged to have been interred 'under a large tree,' 'under trees,' 'under a small stone,' 'near the house,' 'near the path,' etc. But the information seems contradictory. However, the operators were told definitely that her remains *could* and would be found, if searched for. Also, the communicating entity expressed a desire that the nun *should* be searched for, and that her

'Grave was not more than three feet deep.'

*October 28, 1937 (Streatham).*—From now onward all our clues come from the Planchette scripts. Miss Helen Glanville, alone, received some remarkable information and instructions. The first word that was written was 'Well.' The script continues:

Do you want us to look in the well—yes or no? *Yes.*  
Is the well in the cellar? *Yes.*

Shall we find it in the well in the cellar? *Yes.*

Do you mean the well that has been filled in? *Yes.*

It was Mary Lairre who was communicating, and although a 'child' is mentioned, here are definite instructions to search in the 'filled-in' well—*i.e.*, the 'well-tank.' As for the 'child,' Mary was little more than a child when, she alleged, she was strangled.

*October 30, 1937 (Borley).*—The Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr S. H. Glanville were using the Planchette at this séance, and Mary Lairre again announced herself.<sup>1</sup> She said she was murdered by 'Henry' and that her

'remains are near the wall.'

*October 31, 1937 (Streatham).*—Mary Lairre again communicated and said she

'was murdered by Waldegrave'

and that she wanted a Requiem Mass, chant, light, and holy water; that she was buried not 'under the wall,' but

'buried at the end of the wall.'

On January 20, 1945, when this book was half completed, Mr Glanville sent me a folder containing about fifty typed sheets of transcripts made from Planchette scripts *that I had never previously seen or heard of.* I have mentioned how the Glanville family were compelled to use rolls of white wallpaper when using the Planchette, because, often, the writing was so large and was produced so rapidly, and the entities seemed so eager to write, that ordinary sheets of paper were useless for the purpose.

A stack of these rolls, covered on both sides, accumulated. I have one of them before me, and I will reproduce a small portion of it in order to give the reader some idea of what Planchette writing is like. All of these rolls were examined at the time, and some typed transcriptions were made.

When I came to examine these transcriptions I was struck with the number of possible clues that had been recorded, as usual, by Mr Glanville, his family, and his friends. I will now indicate

<sup>1</sup> Mr Henning tells me that the writing of this Planchette script was *identical* to the 'Marie Lairre' wall-writings—a remarkable fact.



PLATE XII. A PORTION OF THE RECTORY CELLAR, SHOWING BRICK WINE-BIN

Photographed January 5, 1944.

[See p. 235]

PLATE XIII. ARCHES IN THE COURTYARD, WITH MAIN WELL (COVERED  
AND WHEEL PUMP

Photographed January 5, 1944.

[See p. 236]





the best of them. They were produced between November 5, 1937, and March 27, 1938.

*November 5, 1937* (Streatham).—For the first and last time in any Planchette script, the term 'Manor of Borley' is written. The 'entity' alleges he is Joseph Glanvill, F.R.S. (Mr S. H. Glanville is a collateral descendant), and writes that if the operators will go to the Manor of Borley

'THE TRUTH WILL BE FOUND.'

*November 20-21, 1937* (Borley).—The Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr S. H. Glanville were the operators. The communicating 'entity' at once wrote that a 'cup' was buried in the garden. This was amplified to 'a jewelled cup,' and, later a 'chalice.' *An excellent sketch of a chalice was drawn on the Planchette script.*

#### 'A PIECE OF PLATE'

The 'entity' then revealed itself as 'Marie Lairre' and wrote that a piece of plate would be found buried with the cup. The plate, it was stated, was 'buried by a soldier,' was still buried, and should be dug up by a priest. Both the 'cup' and 'plate' were buried 'by wall.' Asked if she could name the exact place, 'Mary' replied 'No.' Neither could she tell the operators *when* the cup would be recovered. Later, she told the sitters they were to *dig* by a 'farm wall,' then amplified to brick wall.

#### 'MY BONES'

Then 'Mary Lairre' said that *her bones were buried* near the farm wall, and added, in answer to a question in French, the word 'Grave.'

#### 'HENRY WALDEGRAVE' CONFESSES

Then came the following remarkable 'interview':

Who is speaking now? *Waldegrave.*

What is your Christian name? *Henry.*

What did you do to the nun, Mary Lairre? *Killed.*

How? *Hands.*

Where? *Crypt.*

Is it still here? *No.*

Whereabouts was the crypt? *Here.*

Were you buried in Borley Church? *Yes.*

Thus ended this extraordinary séance, with its detailed 'information' concerning the cup, the chalice, the piece of plate, and the nun's tragedy. Perhaps the presence of the Rev. A. C. Henning induced the 'entities' to excel themselves. Some church plate was removed from Borley Church at the time of the Reformation, and is supposed to be buried. Various attempts have been made to find it.

Whatever value we may attach to Planchette scripts, it is worth noting that at Streatham, on October 31, 1937, 'Marie Lairre' tells Miss Helen Glanville and her brother that she was strangled by a Waldegrave; and on November 20-21, 1937, at Borley Rectory, 'Henry Waldegrave' confesses to Mr Henning and Mr Glanville that he killed Mary 'with his hands,' in the 'crypt.' That must have been the cellars.

*December 5, 1937* (Streatham).—During this very long Planchette séance 'Marie Lairre' again communicated, saying that she knew all about the 'cup' and that she would help us to find it. She also declared that the 'chanting' in Borley Church (to which I referred a page or so back) was due to nuns singing; that the service was 'Vespers,' and that they sang at festivals. Asked whether she sang with them, 'Mary' said 'No.'

*December 12, 1937* (Streatham).—At this séance Miss Helen Glanville and her brother Roger were the operators. Perhaps because they are young they invariably got good results. When I say 'good' I mean interesting, and this particular sitting was no exception.

After some curious messages about 'pearls in a leaden cistern' (referred to previously at a séance on the previous day) an 'entity,' who alleged that he was 'Henry Bull,' suddenly wrote the words 'Borley Rectory' and then again,

**'BORLEY RECTORY IN THE CELLAR THERE.'**

The message was repeated to him, confirmed as correct, and then Planchette wrote:

‘Yes. Is a cup buried under the floor one foot  
Down near the well . . . in a lead box?’

Asked whether the ‘entity’ could tell the operators how far from the cellar door (*i.e.*, the bottom of the cellar steps) the cup was buried, ‘Henry’ said ‘No.’ Then a sketch of the cellar was made (see Plan IV), the Planchette board was placed upon it, and the pencil made a cross over where the round well was marked. The ‘entity’ was then asked whether it knew *who* buried it there, but there was no reply.

Then came another piece of information that is truly remarkable, but which can be fitted into the Borley drama. A new ‘entity’ signed itself—or herself—‘*Mère Beaumaras*,’ said she knew some one called ‘Caldibec,’ who was none other than ‘Mary Lairre.’ (The reader will remember ‘Caldibec’ communicating at previous séances.) Then the following ‘conversation’ ensued:

What happened to her? *Murder.*

Who by? *Waldegrave.*

Is Caldibec unhappy? *Yes.*

Why? *In communion with evil.*

Why was Caldibec murdered? *Sinned.*

How? *Adored Mammon.*

Is she still unhappy because of that? *Yes.*

Will she ever be happy again? *Yes.*

When? *When she earns forgiveness.*

How can she do that? *By perfect love.*

For whom? *Waldegrave.*

Do you help her yourself? *Yes.*

How? *Prayer.*

Are Caldibec and Mary Lairre the same person? *Yes.*

‘*Mère Beaumaras*’ said she was a Mother Superior in a convent, presumably in France. She stated that she was born in 1568. If we take all this Planchette information at its face value this means that the Mother Superior must have been aged eighty when ‘*Marie Lairre*’ was born, as the latter has told us that she passed over in 1667, aged nineteen. It would be possible for the Mother Superior to have known *Marie* during the whole of her short existence, as it is well known that a conventual life is

conducive to longevity ('righteousness tendeth unto life'!). The Mother's last injunctions were, 'Pray for women and men in the service of the Church,' and

'Move the stone on the lawn Borley.'

The stone, she said, was 'near the summer-house.' She did not tell us what might be found under it.

FACSIMILE OF PLANCHETTE SCRIPT. 'JOSEPH GLANVILL'  
SAYS, 'LOOK UNDER THE BRICK FLOOR IN THE CELLAR—  
WELL—BORLEY'

Received December 14, 1937.

*December 14, 1937 (Lancaster Gate, London, W.2).*—This séance was held at the house of Dr H. F. Bellamy, the sitters being the doctor, his wife, Mr S. H. Glanville, and his son Roger. Half-way through the sitting 'Joseph Glanvill' com-

municated and was asked whether he could give some information 'which we don't know, but can prove afterwards.' He said 'Yes.' The following was forthcoming:

What can you tell us? *Look under the brick floor in the cellar.*

Where in the cellar? *Well.*

Where is the house with the cellar? *Borley.* [See *facsimile of writing p. 224.*]

What shall we find there? *Writing.*

On what subject? *Missal.*

Can you tell us exactly where we shall find the Missal? [Answer indecipherable.]

Please write single letters: *P-E-N.*

*December 19, 1937 (Streatham).*—Miss Helen Glanville and her brother Roger were the operators. 'Henry' at once communicated, and said 'Look under the flooring will well help.' Asked what was under the flooring, he said 'Writing,' and added 'P-E-N.' He continued:

'The heap of bones will be found from the garden and the pond. . . .'

Asked whether 'Henry' meant that the bones were dug up from the pond and garden and placed under the flooring, he said 'Yes.' Then:

From whose body are the bones? *Lairre.* [See *facsimile of writing, p. 226.*]

What are your instructions? *Go to Borley and look under the cellar floor for the cup and the missal and you will have proof.*

*January 8, 1938 (Streatham).*—Miss Helen Glanville and Squadron-Leader A. J. Cuthbert were the sitters. Miss Glanville's brother, Squadron-Leader R. H. Glanville, wrote the questions on the paper, so that the sitters were *unaware* of what questions were being asked.

'Henry' communicated and wrote 'Mean to help.' Then another 'entity' signed itself 'Jeanne Waldegrave.' She—or it—did not know either Marie Lairre or Henry Waldegrave, but said:

'I Mean You to Find Much Proof,'

and told the sitters to meet her in the library at Borley Rectory,

and said, 'Tell me what you wish to know and I will help you to prove it somehow in some way.' 'Jeanne Waldegrave' ended the séance with a curious 'message.' It was: 'On the table in the [Rectory] kitchen there is an old spoon of mine—it is for Helen.'

FACSIMILE OF PLANCHETTE SCRIPT. 'HENRY' SAYS THAT THE HUMAN REMAINS ARE THOSE OF 'LAIRRE'

Received December 14, 1937.

*January 12-13, 1938 (Borley).*—The Rev. G. Eric Smith and his wife visited Borley Rectory for a night, with Mr S. H. Glanville, his son Roger, and Dr H. F. Bellamy. Those I have named, with Mr Smith's chauffeur, formed the sitters or operators at this séance. A 'Roman centurion' communicated, said he was in the Tenth Legion, and promised 'information'—presumably at a later date.

The only information that interests us came from the 'entity' calling itself 'Harry Bull.' It was asked, 'Can you tell us where the skull which Mrs Smith found [in the library cupboard] came from?' 'Yes,' wrote the entity. 'It came from a woman.' The woman's name was not known, but the skull itself came 'from Borley.'

*March 27, 1938 (Streatham).*—This is the last Planchette

script received by the Glanville family of which I have any record. I believe there are other rolls of wallpaper, mouldering in their garage, of which no typed transcripts are available. If there are I have not seen them. And, as I have stated, all the scripts I have dealt with above, beginning November 5, 1937, were not seen by me until January 20, 1945.

However, a portion of the script, dated March 27, 1938, *was* entered in Mr Glanville's 'locked book,' and I reproduced a part of it at p. 164 of my previous monograph. It is 'Sunex Amures's' threat to burn the Rectory—which *was* gutted by fire eleven months later.

When I reprinted the extract in my book, and again in Chapter VIII, I did not realize the significance of the latter part of his 'message.' Perhaps I was too sceptical. However, in the light of my analysis of the possible clues and 'indicators,' especially those I found in the scripts that I have just received, I consider that what 'Sunex Amures' said has acquired a greater importance—especially after what we found at Borley in August 1943.

The sitters at this séance were Miss Helen Glanville and her brother Roger, and here is the full message:

'Sunex Amures and one of the men mean to burn the Rectory to-night at nine o'clock end of the haunting go to the Rectory and you will be able to see us enter into our own and under the ruins you will find bone of murdered [indistinct] wardens [?] under the ruins mean you to have proof of haunting of the Rectory at Borley [indistinct] game tells the story of murder which happened there.'

Miss Glanville and her brother did *not* go to the Rectory that evening at nine o'clock, as instructed, and that is, perhaps, why the place was not burnt down on that night 'as promised'! But 'Sunex' eventually kept his word.

It is a pity that *who* was murdered was not made clear in the script. The word after 'murdered' was indecipherable, and the next word, 'wardens,' is meaningless to us. However, the sitters were not certain that the word *was* 'wardens.' It might have been 'ward.' But the injunction to search under the ruins for 'bone of murdered . . .' is quite unambiguous.

It is significant that though the sitters were changed at the various séances, which were held at various places, the same 'entities' communicated, and the majority of the messages were germane to the main theme. And the reader can hardly have failed to notice how frequently the operators were directed to the 'cellar' the 'well' and the 'ruins,' in order to search for the 'bones,' the 'chalice,' and the 'plate,' etc.

I regret very much that the many 'clues' that I have just (February 7, 1945) given the reader were not in our possession five years ago. Had they been I think we would have made a greater effort to excavate the cellars and wells of Borley Rectory before my book was published. The reason why we did not dig there until August 1943 is explained in the next chapter. The reader will there and in Chapter XVIII discover that at least some of the Planchette 'statements' were found to be not fiction, but facts.

## "TRUTH" AT THE BOTTOM OF A WELL?

THE reader will perhaps be wondering why, when Canon Phythian-Adams told us 'to dig,' we were so long in carrying out his suggestion and at the same time testing his theories.

There were several reasons. In January 1941, when I received the Canon's valuable analysis, I was not in possession of the many clues, pointers, and indicators which I afterwards acquired. There seemed no urgency about the matter. The lower portion of the Rectory was still standing, and there was no suggestion that the place would be demolished. In fact, I was contemplating buying the ruins for further research work. I now wish I had.

Another factor was that the Rectory—or what remained of it—was for sale, and Captain Gregson, the owner, would probably not have given us permission still further to damage his property. And in the winter of 1941, owing to enemy action, Essex was not a particularly healthy spot to linger in, though vital business might necessitate one's presence there. I will remark in parentheses that, at about this time, as Mr Henning, the Rector of Borley, was steering his car up the drive to Liston Rectory, in daylight, his home and grounds were encircled with bombs that nearly blew him out of the car. Except for the uprooting of some big trees, and damage to his garage and windows, no particular harm was done. But one cannot 'investigate' comfortably under such conditions.

And, to be honest, I did not quite know how to set about the task of excavating the cellars and clearing out what I thought were two deep filled-in wells. I imagined that the larger of the two latter would contain much semi-liquid matter and debris at the bottom, and I was advised to employ a well-draining engine and suction plant in order to remove the rubbish. I inquired about this and found that fifty pounds would be the cost of hiring such a plant, which would have to come from

London. I hesitated because we were working so much in the dark.

However, I made some tentative inquiries from Mr Henning as to the prospect of getting labour in the Borley district and found, as I anticipated, that no labour was available. This was in the summer of 1941. It requires skilled labour to remove the contents of a deep well—as a well-digger's job is a dangerous and not particularly pleasant one.

In the spring of 1943 I learned that Captain Gregson was making determined efforts to sell his property as he had been offered a good appointment abroad. So I decided that the time had arrived for me to do something about exploring the Rectory cellars. It was a case of now or never, as I guessed that anyone buying the ruins would demolish them for the valuable bricks and building material—much of it in good condition. So I wrote to Captain Gregson, explaining the situation, and asked permission to open up the wells and excavate the cellars. The Captain very kindly gave me *carte blanche* to do as I pleased in the matter, and he was personally interested in the project.

I also wrote to the Rev. A. C. Henning, begging him to make another attempt to find some labour. In his reply Mr Henning said that he had found a man to assist in the digging, and that he himself would lend a hand with pick and shovel. This was really magnificent of him. Unfortunately, with a long-standing strained heart, I could do no digging myself. With his usual kindness, Mr Henning also invited me to make his home my headquarters during my stay in the district, and offered to assist me in any possible way. I gladly accepted hospitality at Liston Rectory, where I had previously stayed. I will take this opportunity of thanking Mr and Mrs Henning for their extraordinary kindness during the days that I spent under their roof. Moreover, at the last moment they extended their hospitality to my ex-secretary, Mrs Alex English (*née* Miss Ethel Beenham), who had kindly agreed to act as note-taker and reporter. With twelve years' experience as my assistant in many investigations, she was, of course, ideal for the purpose; and I thank her, too, for interrupting her domestic duties on our behalf.

## SEARCH FOR WALDEGRAVE RECORDS

As I was going to Borley, I thought I would kill two birds with one stone and make an attempt to find the entrance to the crypt of Borley Church. I wished to ascertain whether there were any records of documents deposited with the Waldegrave coffins in the crypt—those coffins which, as the reader will remember, were supposed to have been moved paranormally. We knew that they were not buried under the Waldegrave tomb, which I have already described<sup>1</sup> and illustrated.<sup>2</sup> I was hoping that we should find some chronicle or parchment that might have thrown light on the missing Arabella Waldegrave. So Mr Henning arranged for a Sudbury firm of masons to send workmen with the necessary tools to meet us at Borley Church on the first morning of our visit. Mr Henning also borrowed from a firm of builders at Long Melford a number of coarse sieves, as every ton of stuff we removed from the cellars would have to be sifted.

At last the appointed day arrived and we all assembled at Borley. It will be convenient at this juncture to give the names of all those who were interested in the excavations, which began on August 17, 1943. The following is a complete list of those who either assisted at the digging, or watched the proceedings, or, later, gave professional opinions as to what was turned up: the Rev. and Mrs A. C. Henning, Mrs Alex English, Mrs Georgina Dawson (whose invaluable researches I have mentioned), Captain W. H. Gregson and his two nieces; Dr Eric H. Bailey, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Senior Assistant Pathologist, County Hospital, Ashford, Middlesex; his brother, Mr Roland F. Bailey, a barrister; Flying-Officer A. A. Creamer, D.F.C., LL.B. (1st Class Honours, University of London); and a local labourer named Jackson, complete with picks, shovels, and other gear. Both Mr R. F. Bailey and Flying-Officer Creamer are civil servants.

By nine o'clock on the morning of August 17 both we and the masons had arrived at Borley Church, and our search for the crypt began. After a careful survey of likely entrances to the space beneath the church the head mason concluded that the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> See Plate VI.

opening to the crypt must be under a heavy stone slab which had been let into the central aisle, and which formed part of the flooring. Obviously it was too large for an ancient memorial stone. So the masons erected their tripod and pulleys, and gradually the slab was raised from its bed. I say 'bed,' because the stone was resting on a layer of sand, and there was *no* opening that led to anywhere beneath the church.

We were disappointed, but we made an interesting discovery. The stone, it appears, had been laid upside down and was, in fact, the base of the pre-Reformation altar. Probably the stone had been purposely reversed in order that no indication of its origin should be apparent. The slab weighed nearly a ton and was five feet long, three feet wide, and six inches thick. It was splayed, with chamfered edges, and ornamented with ogee moulding. I am giving these particulars in order to save some future historian of Borley Church the trouble of erecting lifting tackle and again raising the stone, which the men replaced exactly as we had found it.

We continued our search for an entrance to the crypt, without result. Then the masons inspected likely spots near the church, in the churchyard, where they concluded the opening to the crypt must be. Unfortunately, time did not permit us to start digging up the churchyard, as we were anxious to get down to the more important task of digging up the cellars.

#### GALES DAMAGE THE RECTORY

Before I begin to relate our investigations in the cellars I must give some account of these cellars and details of the wells, and describe the condition in which we found the Rectory in August 1943.

The fire that partly gutted the Rectory on the night of February 27-28, 1939, did most destruction to the roof and first floor, nearly all of which collapsed. The ground-floor rooms were less damaged, though the hall and main staircase were completely burnt out. If the reader will study Plate VII he will see the condition of the place when I photographed it a month after the fire.

I again photographed the ruins during our visit in August 1943 (see Plate VIII), and the havoc caused by four years' gales is very noticeable. If the reader will compare the two pictures he will see that all the brick gables at the back and sides of the house have fallen to the ground, having been blown down. What remained of the iron and glass veranda has disappeared; and the framework of the pinnacled 'tower' at the right of the building has also vanished. In addition, some of the half-burnt rafters supporting the first floor fell into the rooms below; and, as can be seen, shrubs and undergrowth are blocking the lower windows. The only things that—literally—weathered the storms were the chimney-stacks.

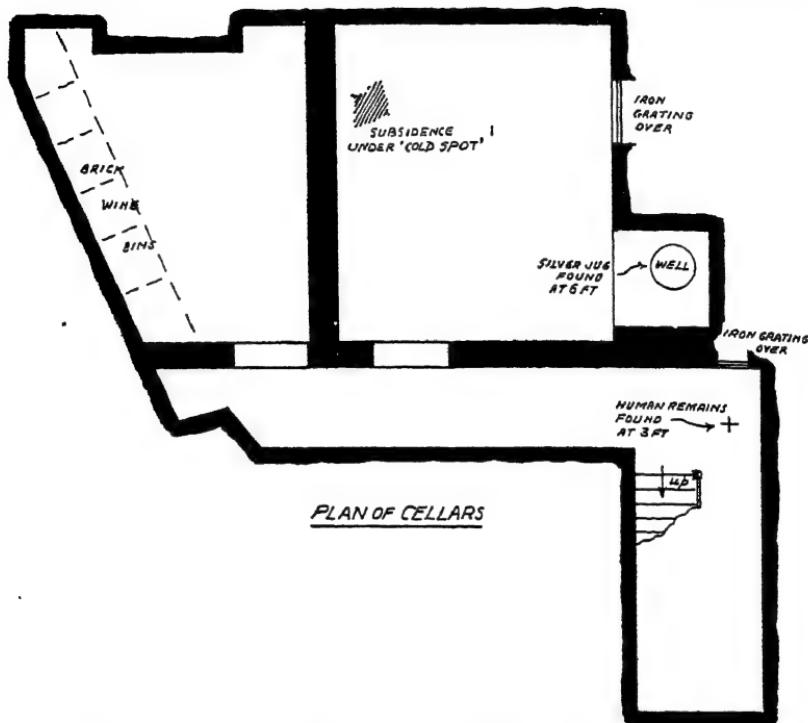
The cellars too suffered. Burnt flooring and rafters from the hall floor and kitchen passage, and most of the wooden stairs, tumbled into the cellars, which later received some tons of bricks, when the gables collapsed. However, 'it is an ill wind . . .' The fact that, after the fire, daylight streamed into the cellars (which formerly were particularly dark) made both digging and photographing easier as regards illumination. But we could have done without the debris. I have often wondered what became of the frogs, toads, and lizards that greeted me in the cellars on my first visit in 1929, jumping and slithering over floors and walls. We saw many young frogs when we emptied the well, but the other fauna had completely disappeared.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE CELLARS

I will now describe the cellars, and the reader should study Plan IV, showing the lay-out, and Plan II, on which is indicated the cellar areas which, as can be seen, were below part of the library, a corner of the dining-room, the whole of the hall, and parts of the kitchen passage and the space between the pantry and the sewing-room. The cellars (really three separate, connected compartments, as can be seen from Plan IV) were very curiously shaped, and their dimensions can be determined from the ground-floor plan. Their strange shape is due (according to Mr S. H. Glanville, who has made a special study of the Rectory architecture) to their partly conforming to the foundation

walls or footings of an ancient building that was previously on the site.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Glanville noticed, as I did, that a part of the cellar floor (indicated on Plan IV) had subsided, so he and Mr Kerr-Pearse



PLAN IV. PLAN OF CELLARS OF BORLEY RECTORY, SHOWING POSITION OF WELL, ETC.

Drawn by S. H. Glanville.

dug up (November 1, 1937) this portion of the cellar. In his report ('Locked Book,' folio 92) Mr Kerr-Pearse says:

We discovered what appeared to be the foundation of an older house, the bricks found being the old-fashioned two-inch variety.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Some idea as to the age of these foundations can be gained from the age of the two-inch bricks. The bricks made in England before 1625 were of many sizes, there being no recognized standard; but in that year the sizes were regulated by statute, and the present standard size was adopted—namely, 9 in.  $\times$  4½ in.  $\times$  3 in.

Therefore, all the two-inch bricks found at Borley must have been made before 1625. Two-inch bricks, or fragments, were found in the cellar wells and under the cellar flooring (see pp. 239 and 242).—H. P.

It then occurred to the writer that this foundation was perpendicular to the left-hand wall of the cellar No. 1 [the compartment on the left of our Plan IV]. On investigation this was found to be so. When examining this latter wall we found that it also consisted of two-inch bricks, but from a level of six inches above the floor ordinary modern bricks were used. The angles of the most curiously placed buttresses at the end of the passage are also parallel to the two walls already mentioned, which would appear to prove that this was also part of the older building. A house built on this supposed former site would face roughly south.

Another curious discovery was made: it was found that the subsidence in the cellar was *exactly* under the 'cold spot' on the landing outside the Blue Room, on which a number of observers had suddenly felt chilled.<sup>1</sup> That the air *did* at times become cooler at this spot (see Plate X<sup>2</sup>) is definitely proved by the carefully controlled experiments of I. S. Longmuir and A. Heap (members of the Cambridge Commission) on the night of June 19, 1943, when there was a localized drop of eleven degrees Fahrenheit at the 'cold spot.'

As I have stated elsewhere, the only entrance to the cellars was by a flight of wooden stairs leading down from the kitchen passage. For light and air two small gratings, below the courtyard level, had been fixed. They furnished little air, and less light, as they were more or less blocked up with weeds and rank grass on the occasions when I visited the Rectory. We could find our way about the cellars only with the aid of electric torches, and even then we had to be careful not to slip on the slimy floors or tread on the many families of frogs which were hopping about all over the place. In the photograph (Plate XI) can be seen one of the gratings I have mentioned, and the charred remains of the beams that supported the hall floor. In another picture (Plate XII) can be seen some of the brick wine-bins, of which there were many.

#### THE FOUR WELLS

I will now give an account of the wells, of which there were originally four. I have already (pp. 25 and 26) described the main

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 80 and 81.    <sup>2</sup> And Plate III, *The Most Haunted House in England*.

well (Plate XIII) in which was discovered, by means of a flare and sinker, an aperture or tunnel sixty-two feet below ground-level. In the photograph which I now reproduce can be seen the wheel pump under the arches in the courtyard, and the cover over the mouth of the well.

In a corner of one of the cellars we discovered another and smaller round bricked well (see Plan IV), filled to the top with debris and covered with a hatch. We had no means, at that period, of determining its depth. It was three feet in diameter. I am reproducing a photograph of it, taken *after* we had emptied it in August 1943 (Plate XIV). It has been partly filled in again, and water has risen nearly to the top. To drain this well there was, anciently, a hand-pump in the courtyard. This pump was still fixed to the wall when I rented the Rectory. In our photograph (Plate XV) the mark where the pump had been can be seen to the right of the creeper on extreme right of picture. The photograph also shows the door leading to the kitchen passage, above which is the window lighting the main staircase.

In the left foreground of this same photograph can be seen the stone slabs covering our third well—a soft-water one that does not enter into the story.

I now come to our fourth well—or what was once a well—and there is considerable mystery concerning it. When I was asked to visit Borley Rectory on June 12, 1929, one of the first things we did was to examine the cellars. Our party, armed with torches, descended the wooden stairs leading from the kitchen passage to the cellars. Having arrived at the bottom of the stairs, the man in front stepped to the right in order to allow me (I was just behind him) to lead the way. As my friend moved to the right he stepped on to something which collapsed under him. I clutched his arm and helped him to extricate his right leg, which had gone clean through a rotten wooden hatch-cover into what was afterwards discovered to be a shallow stone or cement oblong, rectangular trough or tank which was filled with water.

Later inspection proved it to be (I am speaking from memory) about two feet six inches long, two feet wide, and nine inches



PLATE XIV. ROUND BRICK WELL IN CELLAR, WHERE CREAM-JUG WAS FOUNT  
See Plan IV. Photographed January 5, 1944.

PLATE XV. THE RECTORY COURTYARD, SHOWING STONE SLABS (LEFT FOREGROUND)  
COVERING THE SOFT-WATER WELL  
Photographed January 5, 1944.





deep. We attempted to clear it out, but as we found only old bottles (there were hundreds of empty bottles in the cellars) and broken china in the 'well,' and as we had no means of removing the water, we abandoned our task after warning our friends to be careful where they walked. The Rev. G. Eric Smith, who was then the Rector of Borley, told me that he understood that the tank-like trough (the 'well-tank' of the wall messages) marked the site of an ancient filled-in well.

#### THE MISSING WELL

In *The Most Haunted House in England* (pp. 19 and 20) I mention the incident of my friend putting his foot through the hatch-cover. I say: 'A shallow well, properly in the courtyard, extends into the portion of the cellar under the kitchen passage. It was covered in with some boards, rotten and antique, and was "discovered" by one of our observers literally putting his foot in it, and nearly falling in.'

In the above passage it is obvious that, when writing it, I was confusing the small round well (Plate XIV) with the 'well-tank' at the foot of the cellar stairs. It was the 'well-tank' that was under the kitchen passage: the round well was in that narrow extension of the cellar (see Plan IV) that jutted out into the courtyard. And anyone descending the cellar stairs could not possibly have walked across the *round* well, which was in a different part of the cellar altogether, and was divided from the cellar passage by a thick partition wall. My excuse for the confusion about the two wells is that I was writing from my notes (which I misread) ten years after the incident, and one hundred and fifty miles from the Rectory, and without being able to consult the cellar plan which Mr S. H. Glanville subsequently made specially for the present monograph. And now for the mystery: when we came to search for the 'well-tank' in August 1943 it had completely disappeared! But I will refer to this later. The only possible reason for making the 'well-tank' was for catching the surface water, which sometimes flooded the cellars. As I have stated, they were so damp that frogs, newts, and lizards thrived there.

I must now return to our investigations. After our failure to find the crypt we went over in a body to the Rectory, just across the road. After clambering down—at some risk—what was left of the charred stairs leading to the cellars, our first task was to find the ‘well-tank,’ the sunken trough I had seen on my visit to the place in 1929. I had decided to start excavating on this site because I thought that here was the most likely spot for good results in view of Canon Phythian-Adams’s analysis, the wall message (‘well-tank-bottom-me’), and other indicia. But the first thing to do was to remove some of the rubbish from off the floors—broken brickwork, tiles, bottles, and heaps of rubble. Of course, the first area we tackled (I say ‘we,’ but I could take no part in such strenuous work on account of my heart) was the ground to the right of the cellar stairs. We began at 9.30 A.M. After clearing several square yards and almost boxing ourselves in with the heaps of rubble that we had piled up I was forced to the conclusion that the well-tank was missing! It certainly was *not* where it was in 1929.

#### FIRST DAY'S DIGGING

One of the difficulties of working in the Rectory cellars was what to do with all the rubbish that littered the place. We could not remove it above ground, so had continually to shift the same stuff from one spot to another in order to examine the various sections of the floor. It was always in the way, but by removing it in this manner, and by probing through the debris with an iron rod, we were able, at 10 A.M., to form the conclusion that the sunken well had vanished! It was inexplicable to me, and was just another Borley mystery. I was so certain as to the exact position of the well that I could have found my way there in the dark. Actually the cellars were not dark, as some light streamed through what had once been the hall floor (Plate XI). I decided to abandon the search for the well-tank for the time being, and tackle the round well, which was on the other side of the brick partition (see Plan IV). So with spades and shovels the diggers began clearing the debris which completely hid this well. Fortunately, *that* had not vanished, and Jackson, with his

two feet planted on top of the rubbish with which it was filled, began to empty the well. Mrs English took a note of everything that was found. 'Everything' consisted mostly of ashes, broken tiles, oyster-shells,<sup>1</sup> potsherds, bits of pottery, fragments of ancient two-inch bricks, and the eternal empty wine-bottles.

However, there were other and more interesting things in the well. At eighteen inches Jackson came to the water-level—and young frogs. Myriads of them! He recalled an old Suffolk superstition that if one puts a live frog on one's navel it turns into a sovereign. No one tried the experiment. Then he handed up a fine, large, antique brass preserving-pan, with an inner liner, both pans with handles, one of which was broken. The pan was sixteen inches in diameter. Then came more broken glass, a portion of a broken brass candlestick, a part of a small rusty iron coffer or box—lidless—broken knives, etc.

#### WHOSE CREAM-JUG?

At five feet six inches we came across a real 'find.' (Jackson was now standing in water, which he was baling out with the preserving-pan.) As Jackson handed it up I at once recognized it as a milk- or cream-jug (see Plate XVI), of good workmanship, chased and fluted. It measures  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches high, by  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches across the base. It was as black as ebony and appeared to be made of silver, though there are neither hallmarks nor makers' marks on it. It stands the acid test for silver, and is, perhaps, a piece of good-quality Sheffield plate. That same evening, after dinner at Liston Rectory, and with the aid of Mrs Henning's polishing materials—and two hours' elbow grease—I restored the cream-jug to its original beauty, and when I had finished with it it might have come straight from the makers. It was absolutely as new. I later took it to a firm of well-known London silversmiths, and I was informed that it was about eighty years old. They remarked upon the fact that it bore no identification marks of any kind. It would be interesting to know how the jug came to be dropped—or placed—in the well, and who was the original owner of it.

<sup>1</sup> As wells were often situated in the cellars of monastic buildings, I could not help wondering whether the shells supported the 'monastic foundation' theory. But other people besides monks are fond of oysters!

After the discovery of the cream-jug I was hoping that the plate, long missing from Borley Church, might be discovered among the rubbish. But we were disappointed in this respect. Actually, nothing else of value or interest was found in the well. In fact, except for more empty wine-bottles, etc., and a few inches of water, there was nothing in the well at all—except Jackson! His head had almost disappeared and he was wondering how he should get out again, when the supply of half-bricks and oyster-shells suddenly ran out, and he realized that he was standing on the bottom of the well—about six feet deep. Jackson, with difficulty, continued baling out the water to enable us to examine the bottom. This was formed of bricks, similar in appearance to those used to build the sides. They were old bricks, but not the ancient two-inch variety. We hauled Jackson out.

We were now faced with the problem whether we had really come to the bottom of the original well, or to a false bottom which had been constructed at some period in the past. Without proper tackle, which was not available, we could not break through the hard bricks that confronted us. It seems highly improbable that a well only six feet deep should have been placed in such a remote part of the cellar. If the pit was made merely for draining the surface water it was (*a*) in the wrong place, and (*b*) too deep for the purpose. We never solved the mystery.

We finished investigating the round bricked well at about 11.30, and then moved over to the cellar passage once more to examine the floor. We could find no trace of the well-tank, and I was forced to the conclusion that at some time between 1939 and 1943 one of the occupants of the Rectory had removed the tank and had rebricked the aperture to match the surrounding flooring. I was so seldom at the Rectory during 1937-38, when I rented the place, that I have no recollection of seeing the well-tank during that period. I believe it had been bricked up after Captain Gregson bought the place—perhaps without his knowledge. Neither Mr Henning nor Captain Gregson was able to enlighten me. A minute scrutiny of the ground where the well

had been revealed not the slightest sign that the flooring had been disturbed. The whole of the cellar was covered with hard, flat (without hollows or 'frogs'), semi-glazed bricks (in order to resist the damp) of the ordinary type and size.

#### BELow THE CELLAR FLOOR

However, as I was quite positive as to the exact position of the old well, we decided to begin digging operations at this point. It was not at all an easy matter to break through the flooring, but Jackson, with his pickaxe, finally removed a few bricks, and the rest was fairly easy going.

We found the soil beneath the cellar floor to be of a hard and tenacious clayey marl—known locally as 'blue vinney' or 'blue billy.' Having removed some scores of bricks, my helpers got busy. As Mr Henning and Jackson broke up the soil with their picks others shovelled it out and sifted it.

By 1.45 we had picked and shovelled and sifted some tons of marl, and had dug to a depth of three feet. Mrs English has the following entry in her notes: '1.45. Jaw-bone (pig?) found.' Her note records the fact that Jackson had just handed up what was obviously a jaw-bone of some animal (with five teeth *in situ*) with the remark that it came from a pig. But immediately Dr Bailey saw it he at once said it was human. I did not know to what animal the bone had belonged. Five minutes later Mrs English made the entry: '1.50. Part of skull dug up.' There was no mistaking to what 'animal' this fragment belonged: it was human. Jackson had shovelled it up with a lot of broken clay into the sieve, where it was immediately noted. The cavity of the skull was filled with hard marl, and cutting this out with a penknife was a delicate business, because the bone was so brittle. It was found only a few inches from the jaw-bone.

Dr Eric Bailey gave us the following expert opinion of the remains: 'The jaw-bone is the left mandible, with five teeth in good condition, and probably belonged to a woman. The other bone is from the left side of a human skull and is the parietal and temporal bone' (see Plate XVIII). When he returned to

Sudbury that same evening (August 17, 1943) he wrote to the Rev. A. C. Henning and confirmed the details in writing.

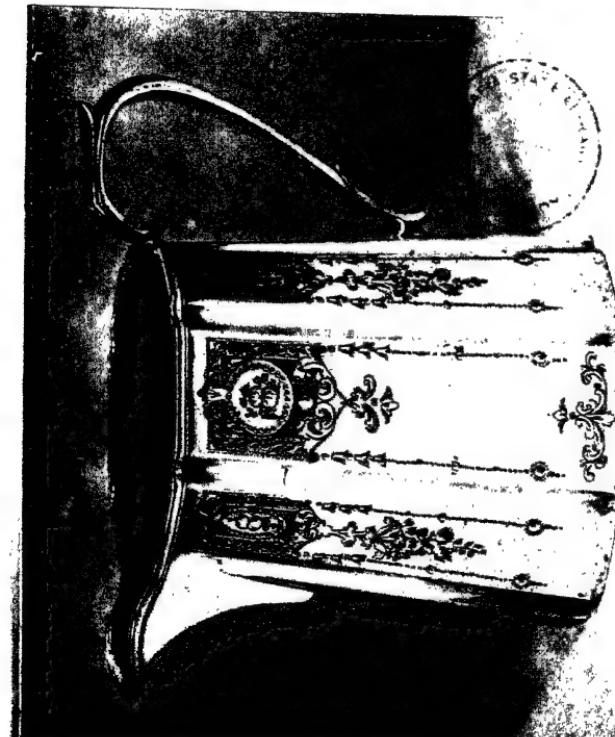
As we were now very tired (Mr Henning and Jackson especially had been working like niggers), we all adjourned to the lawn, at a spot between the famous summer-house and the Nun's Walk, and partook of an *al fresco* lunch, a really sumptuous meal kindly provided by Mrs Henning. It was a very jolly party, and the hot sunny weather was ideal for such a gathering.

We resumed digging operations soon after three o'clock and worked steadily until five, but no further objects of importance were turned up. After Captain Gregson and his nieces had taken some photographs Mr Henning took Mrs English and me back to Liston Rectory, and the other members of the party went to their respective homes or hotels. Dr Bailey and his brother and Flying-Officer Creamer returned to Sudbury.

Though, as I have stated, we turned up nothing of importance during the afternoon of August 17, we found embedded in the marl various small objects which were interesting because they obviously belonged to a period anterior to that in which the Rectory was built. We discovered one or two whole two-inch bricks and several pieces that matched those used in the footings of the ancient foundation walls we had already discovered in another part of the cellar. We also found a number of old potsherds, fragments of ancient tiles, and bits of broken clay pipes, which, I think, were made long before the Rectory was built in 1863. Unfortunately we failed to unearth either the 'chalice' or the 'missal' mentioned in the Planchette scripts.

#### DIVINING FOR CHURCH PLATE

Speaking of the chalice, over dinner that evening at Liston Rectory, Mr Henning told me an interesting story of how a lady diviner, Mrs Collett, whom he had called in in an attempt to find the missing church plate, visited the cellars. Exploring the various compartments, she suddenly stopped near the site of the well-tank; her traditional hazel twig became violently agitated and snapped in two *exactly* over the area where the human remains and other objects were subsequently found. I must



LATE XVI. SHEFFIELD-PLATE CREAM-JUG, 4½ INCHES HIGH BY  
1¾ INCHES ACROSS THE BASE, FOUND AT THE BOTTOM OF THE  
ROUND WELL IN THE RECTORY CELLAR, AUGUST 17, 1943

LATE XVII. THE REV. A. C. HENNING, RECTOR OF BORLEY,  
AND JACKSON DIGGING UP THE FLOOR OF THE RECTORY CELLAR.



emphasize that I did not know of these experiments until *after* we had concluded our first day's digging; so that Mrs Collett's experiment did not influence us as to where we should dig.

Also over dinner we discussed the fragments of skull and jaw-bone. These were found almost hard up against the footings or foundation walls of the Rectory, near the top end of the wall to the right of the bottom of the cellar steps, and near the cross marked on Plan IV. We agreed that probably, at some time or other, a complete skeleton lay buried near this spot. And it is almost certain that the men who built the Rectory, when digging the foundations, disturbed and scattered the remains. They might not have been aware of this, as perhaps the bones were not noticed. On the other hand, the skeleton may have been seen and portions of it removed as souvenirs. My own opinion is that other parts of the skeleton still lie scattered under the cellar floor, and that it might take weeks of digging and much labour to find them. The subsidence in the cellar flooring (under the 'cold spot') should also be re-dug. As the reader knows, Mr S. H. Glanville and Mr M. Kerr-Pearse excavated the 'subsidence' on November 1, 1937, and found nothing. But they may not have gone down deep enough. They certainly did not dig three feet, the depth at which all the objects were found. It is easy for the reader to say that the whole of the cellar area should have been dug over. But excavating is a tiring, lengthy, and expensive business. And those persons best qualified to do it are busy men, with little leisure for such work, many miles from their homes. I live a hundred and fifty miles from Borley, so I know how the other enthusiasts must feel about it.

When the human remains were found my helpers raised the question as to whether the fragment of skull had any possible connexion with the complete skull found in the Rectory library cupboard by the Rev. G. Eric Smith and his wife during the first weeks of Mr Smith's incumbency in 1928. This too was thought to have belonged to a young woman. It is, of course, a matter for speculation, but I doubt whether a relation between the two skulls can be established.

Before I give an account of our next day's digging I will

complete the details we learned about the skull and jaw-bone. On my return to London I submitted (August 19, 1943) both objects to a West End dental surgeon of repute. He too expressed his opinion that the skull was that of a youngish person, but that the fragment was too small to afford sufficient data to determine the sex of the owner. As for the age of it, this was difficult to fix for the same reason. 'Anything over a hundred years old' appears to sum up the consensus of expert opinion. According to the type of soil in which organic remains are buried, bones or similar objects either age and are finally destroyed, or they are more or less preserved. A lime clay, such as the subsoil under Borley Rectory, would probably tend to hasten the decay of human remains. We found the skull very decayed, very brittle, very soft, and rather porous.

At the first cursory examination of the jaw-bone the dental surgeon expressed his opinion that it belonged to a youngish woman round about the age of thirty. When I came to write the present monograph I again submitted the jaw-bone to the same gentleman, who made a careful study of it and X-rayed the fragment. He sent me his two reports on May 23, 1945. I will take this opportunity of publicly thanking him for devoting his time, labour, and skill to helping us in our attempt to throw some light on the human remains found at Borley. Here are his two reports:

#### REPORT ON EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF JAW

*General.* The fragment consists of all the left side of the lower jaw from and including the distal wall of the left canine socket. All the appropriate teeth are present, viz., first and second premolars; first, second, and third molars. The professional method of writing these is  $\overline{45678}$ . As a specimen, the condition is good, but the outer plate of the first premolar has been lost *post mortem*.

*Dental.* The teeth are well formed and free from decay. A fair amount of tartar is present.  $\overline{78}$  are slightly out of alignment owing to lack of room for  $\overline{8}$ . There is well-marked attrition which increases from  $\overline{4}$  to  $\overline{6}$ , where it has destroyed the biting surface of the enamel cap, and then decreases in  $\overline{7}$  and still more in  $\overline{8}$ . It should be remembered that  $\overline{6}$  is the oldest tooth of the five and erupted at six years or earlier. There is some absorption of bone,

particularly round  $\bar{6}$ , but not enough to indicate gross paradental disease.

*Deductions.* From the slenderness of the ascending ramus, and the moderate degree of development of the muscle attachments, I believe the jaw to be that of a woman. From the condition of the teeth and bone, I put the age at death at round about thirty years, with more probability of its being under than over. The diet contained a good amount of roughage and probably some finely divided grit. I cannot assess with any accuracy the age of the specimen.

May 23, 1945

LESLIE J. GODDEN

#### REPORT ON X-RAY APPEARANCE OF JAW

*Teeth.* The large pulp chambers suggest the lower end of the probable range of age mentioned in the previous Report. Notice the loss of the biting surface of the enamel cap in  $\bar{6}$ , and the calcific deposits in the pulp chamber.<sup>1</sup> The anterior root of  $\bar{6}$  shows evidence of infection, very likely arising from the fact that the anterior horn of the pulp approaches very closely to the denuded biting surface of the tooth.

*Bone.* There is a large area below  $\bar{6}$ , and extending deep into the jaw, of infected bone. It doubtless arises by spread of infection from  $\bar{6}$ . It is extensive and indicates an infection of some severity. It is in close association with the canal which carries the main nerve of the area.

May 23, 1945

LESLIE J. GODDEN

The dental surgeon took several X-ray films of the jaw, and sent me two of them. I reproduce the better print (Plate XIX). In his covering letter (May 23, 1945) he remarks:

The condition indicated on both the films I have sent you, and on those I still have, could be responsible for anything from a persistent mild ache to any one or any combination of the following: a raging toothache; a persistent severe neuralgia; pain in and anterior to the ear; pain above the eye or down the side of the nose. Which of these really occurred, I cannot say; but the fact that the disease is so deep-seated and is in such close association with the mandibular nerve, does suggest that the owner of the bone had a good deal of pain from it.

<sup>1</sup> The presence of these pulp stones, so well defined in a patient relatively so young, is a point to be noted. Their presence is consistent with the chronic inflammatory condition to which the tooth was exposed (see X-ray photo).—L. J. G.

The reader will remember that those of our witnesses (and there are a number of them) who saw the nun invariably describe her as 'in pain,' or 'miserable,' or with 'face drawn,' or with a 'pale face,' or 'sad,' or 'as if she had been crying'—never as being happy-looking or laughing. A deep-seated abscess (which the owner of our jaw-bone undoubtedly had at time of death) could account for the pale and haggard appearance of the nun. This is an important point.

Another important point is that the owner of the jaw was undoubtedly a young woman. And an interesting sidelight is that her diet 'contained a large amount of roughage and probably some finely divided grit.' This is exactly the sort of food that a person, rich or poor, would eat in 1667—the year in which the 'nun' said she was strangled, when she was aged nineteen. The simple—even coarse—meals that would be served in conventional establishments, especially to novices, would consist largely of coarse stone-ground flour or meal made into bread or rough cakes, and these would contain a considerable amount of siliceous matter or grit in a fine state.

#### SECOND DAY'S DIGGING

Immediately after breakfast on the morning of August 18, 1943, we resumed excavating the cellars. The diggers gradually extended by several square yards the area around the site of the well-tank, striking to a depth of three feet. The usual potsherds, broken tiles, and other odds and ends were found, but nothing interesting was turned up until 11.45, when among the siftings was noticed a thin oval-shaped piece of metal, with a loop attached. When the clay was removed it was found that the metal was yellow, slightly discoloured, with a slight green rust or patina (*aerugo*). Subsequent examination and testing proved that the metal was poor-quality gold. It was much worn, but when scrubbed under the pump traces of a figure and the word *Pax* could be discerned. A few minutes later there was discovered in siftings taken from the same part of the cellar a small, thick, ovate plaque, with a loop, two inches long. Mrs English and I scrubbed off the clay under the pump, and it was found

PLATE XVIII. HUMAN REMAINS  
REMOVED FROM RECTORY  
CELLAR, AUGUST 17, 1943

[See p. 241]

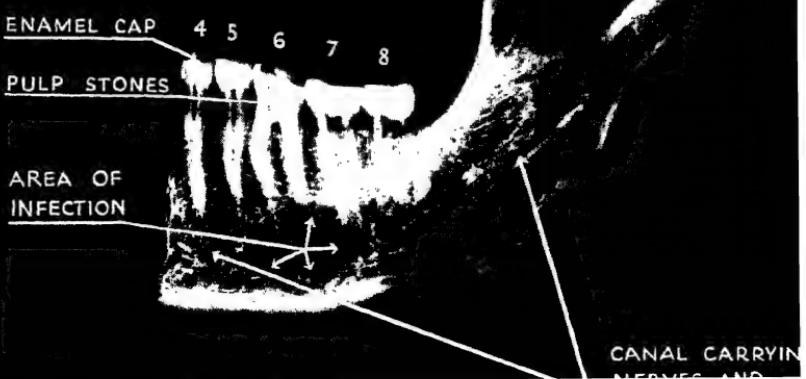


PLATE XIX. SKIAGRAPH AND  
X-RAY ANALYSIS, BY LESLIE  
J. GODDEN, L.D.S., R.C.S., OF  
WOMAN'S JAW-BONE FOUND  
UNDER RECTORY CELLAR,

AUGUST 17, 1943

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### LEFT SIDE OF JAW





that the plaque was made of copper, coated with a thick green patina and much corroded and eaten away through long contact with the marl. Removal of some of the patina revealed inscriptions and figures plainly readable and visible. Obviously, both the piece of gold metal and the copper plaque were intended as pendants, and bore religious symbols, etc. They will be discussed in the next chapter.

The diggers worked steadily throughout the day (with a break for lunch), but found nothing worth recording. At five o'clock Mr Henning took Mrs English and me back to the Rectory, where we arrived in time for tea. The other members of the party went their several ways. Before leaving the Rectory Captain Gregson very kindly presented me with the large bronze bell (see Plate XX) that had, for exactly eighty years, swung in its cradle high up above the courtyard. It was a nice souvenir of our visit. Many times—it is alleged—has this bell been rung paranormally. Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., records<sup>1</sup> how the bell was rung in daylight on several occasions when he was there. With great difficulty we lowered the bell and its cradle to the ground, and it now hangs in my garden.

### THIRD DAY'S DIGGING

We left Jackson to clear up the mess in the cellars, but he had instructions not to replace the marl that had been removed, as it was our intention to resume digging at an early date. I returned to London on August 19. A few days later (August 30, 1943) Mr Sidney H. Glanville, his son, Squadron-Leader R. H. Glanville, the Rev. A. C. Henning, Mrs Henning, Jackson, and myself again visited the Rectory cellars and had a day's digging. Nothing of interest was discovered, and the marl and bricks were replaced—not very neatly, I am afraid (see Plate XXI). Thus ended (at least for the time being) our investigation of the Rectory cellars. Before we left Mr S. H. Glanville made a plan of the cellars. Those interested in photography might like to know that the pictures of Mr Henning and Jackson digging, Liston Rectory, and one or two more illustrations that I reproduce

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 97.

were taken on an 'Agfa' film-pack *ten years old*. Failing to obtain a new pack of any make, I decided—with some trepidation—to risk using one I had by me, and the film proved to be as good as new.

Did we find 'truth' at the bottom of a well? Were the human remains those of the ill-fated 'Marie Lairre'? Had the religious pendants any conceivable connexion with 'Marie' or the 'Borley mystery'? It is impossible, of course, fully to answer these questions; but the reader, when he has finished this volume, will doubtless be able to decide for himself.

There is still one more possibility that I have not mentioned. As I have recorded in Chapter I, Mr Glanville and his son discovered (August 14, 1937) that the 'cats' cemetery,' in a remote and unfrequented part of the Rectory grounds, had been disturbed. It had been dug over, and the headboards scattered. Some one had expended much time and labour—for what purpose? No one knows. Had something—or the remains of some one—been disinterred, or had something been buried? Inquiries by the Glanvilles and myself threw no light on the mystery.

On August 28, 1937, the Glanvilles, in an attempt to solve the puzzle, dug over the large patch of ground that had been surreptitiously disturbed. They hoped to find something. They did—they 'turned up a lot of large bones that certainly never formed part of the anatomy of a cat . . . but one or two of them they could not identify.'<sup>1</sup> Were they human?

Whether we accept or reject the 'table-tipping' and/or Planchette messages, it is a fact that in several of them the sitters were told that 'Marie Lairre's' bones were 'in the garden,' and in one of them that they had been removed to the cellar. For example, in Chapter VIII (the 'Locked Book') the sitters were informed (by 'table-tipping', October 24, 1937) that the nun's remains were *in the garden*; also, that *only* the nun's bones were there. They were 'under a large tree,' 'under trees,' 'near the path,' etc. On October 30, 1937, the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr S. H. Glanville were informed (Planchette), by the alleged nun herself, that she had been buried *in the garden*.

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 199.

In the new scripts (Planchette) which I received when this book was half completed I discovered that, with Miss Glanville and her brother as sitters, an entity who called himself 'Henry' wrote (December 19, 1937) that '*under the cellar floor will be found heap of bones from the garden and the pond.*' Asked whose bones they were, 'Henry' said 'Lairre.' (See facsimile of writing, p. 226.) So now we have the definite statements that Mary Lairre's bones had been removed from the garden and—by implication—reburied under the cellar flooring.

The 'cats' cemetery' is near the pond (or, as it is sometimes called, the stream, according to the season of the year: see plan of grounds); it is 'under trees,' 'near the path' (now overgrown), etc. So is it not possible that some of the bones that Mr Glanville dug up, but could not identify, were, in fact, human? Perhaps part of the skeleton of Marie Lairre, fragments of which we found under the cellar floor? It is conceivable that some of the nun's remains were removed from that part of the garden which, in very wet weather, forms a sort of pond, and were reburied under the cellar—as Planchette revealed. Unfortunately, none of the bones that Mr Glanville found was preserved.

In my *The Most Haunted House in England* (p. 26) I remark that 'A portion of the garden of Borley Rectory is the site of the burial place of some of the victims of the Great Plague which ravaged England in 1654-55.' This information was given to me in good faith, but I now believe the story to be little more than a tradition. But, assuming there was such a pit in the Rectory garden, it is conceivable that *all* the human remains found at Borley by us and others originated there. Unfortunately the Church registers record no deaths before 1656, so we do not know how many—if any—villagers died of the plague.

## 'THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL'

ATTER dinner at Liston Rectory on the evening of August 18, 1943, we once more turned our attention to the morning's discoveries, especially the patinated plaque. This we again scrubbed, removing most of the green patina. The lettering and religious symbols were now quite visible, and we could make out the following inscriptions, etc. Obverse: the Virgin Mary, full length, crushing the head of the serpent under her feet. Rays of light issue from her fingers and fall on a terrestrial globe on which she is standing, the whole surrounded by stars. Round the periphery of the plaque is the following invocation: 'O Mary, Conceived Without Sin, Pray for Us Who Have Recourse to Thee.' On the reverse of the plaque is the monogram 'M' (for Mary) with two hearts, surrounded by twelve stars. One of the hearts is pierced with a sword. In the field of the plaque are twelve stars.

The Rev. A. C. Henning, after a careful examination of the plaque, suggested that the stars may represent the twelve tribes of Israel, including that of Judah, of which Mary was a descendant. The rays from her hands are obviously healing rays. The pierced heart may be symbolic of the words of Simeon (Luke ii, 35): 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed,' and refers to our Lord's suffering on the Cross, and the suffering of His Mother, Mary. Mr Henning also suggested that the twelve stars were those of the Woman of the Apocalypse, as recorded in Revelation xii, 1: 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'

As for the small gold pendant, Mr Henning could say little about that as it is so much worn and corroded owing to the low

quality of the metal. But on the obverse can be seen faintly the figure of the Virgin, with the word 'Pax' underneath. On the reverse are religious symbols, including twelve stars.

When I returned to London I visited (August 25, 1943) Westminster Cathedral and saw the Rev. Father M. J. Moriarty, who gave me his opinion concerning the plaques. He at once recognized the larger one as a specimen of the 'Miraculous Medal,' the history of which I will give later. He kindly loaned me a pamphlet, *The Miraculous Medal and Blessed Catherine Labouré*,<sup>1</sup> in which is a full account of how these medals came to be struck. It is an interesting story. Father Moriarty could not, of course, give me any information concerning the particular specimen of the 'Miraculous Medal' that I showed him. He had never seen one exactly like it, and thought that most of these pendants were struck in France. As for the gold pendant, he had never seen one like it, and it was quite unknown in this country. He said it is undoubtedly of foreign make, and probably French. It is very old.

When I left Father Moriarty I called on Messrs Maurice Vanpouille, the church furnishers and Roman Catholic medalists, of Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1, who confirmed what Father Moriarty had told me. They said the copper plaque was about sixty years old, and the gold pendant was much older. They had never seen another specimen, and it was probably French. Both pendants were often attached to rosaries as worn by nuns. I will now quote from the pamphlet I received from Father Moriarty and relate how Zoë Labouré, afterwards the Blessed Catherine Labouré, received instructions, direct from the mouth of the Virgin Mary, for the striking of a medallion recording the visions seen by Catherine on three occasions in the year 1830. Here, then, is

#### THE STORY OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

Zoë Labouré was born in 1806 in the small village of Fain-les-Moûtiers, in the Department of the Côte-d'Or, France. She was one of a family of seven sons and three daughters. Her

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Sisters of Charity, St Vincent's, Dublin (n. d.).

parents were simple and devout Catholics, who lived a frugal and laborious life cultivating their little farm. Zoë was a good girl, and when, at the age of eight, she lost her mother the child felt 'that henceforth Our Lady might be her Mother.' At the age of twelve Zoë made her first Communion. As her eldest sister had become a Sister of Charity, on Zoë fell the charge of managing the household. She cooked for the family, carried the food to the workers in the fields, and performed with fidelity the many tasks that such a large family entailed.

Zoë was very fond of pets, especially pigeons, of which there were between seven and eight hundred on the farm. Her especial delight was the care of the pigeon-house, and the birds loved her. 'They knew her and she knew them, and as if they realized the purity of her heart and the great things God had in store for her, they came when she appeared, as her sister described it, circling round her in the form of a crown.' From her earliest childhood she fasted on Fridays and Saturdays, and heard Mass daily at an early hour, 'kneeling without support on the cold pavement, even in the frosts of winter.'

At the age of eighteen, through neglect of her education, Zoë, we are told, could hardly read or write. But she had a strange dream: she dreamt that she was in the village church, where she saw an aged priest saying Mass. When it was over the priest called her to come to him, but, being frightened, she drew back. She left the church and entered one of the houses in the village to visit a sick person. Again she saw the aged priest, who said to her: 'My daughter, you do well to take care of the sick. You shrink from me now, but one day you will be eager to come to me. God has great designs in your regard.' Then she woke up. But her dream had so impressed her that she prevailed on her father to allow her to go and stay at Châtillon-sur-Seine (readers will recollect that it was the Congress of Châtillon, in 1814, which pronounced the deposition of Napoleon I), where her sister-in-law was a schoolmistress. One day, when visiting the Sisters of Charity in the neighbourhood, 'she was struck by the sight of a picture that was an exact portrait of the priest of her dream.' When, on asking who it was, she heard it was St

Vincent, 'God's purpose became manifest'—she was to become a Sister of Charity.

Zoë was six years trying to persuade her father to permit her to join the Sisters at Châtillon, but at last he consented, and she entered as a postulant. A few months later, in April 1830, she was received into the novitiate, at the Mother House in the Rue du Bac, Paris. 'Then straightaway began the series of heavenly apparitions which God granted to this chosen soul.'

#### VISION OF THE HEART

It happened that on April 25 of this year—1830—occurred the solemn translation of the relics of St Vincent-de-Paul. His remains had been hidden from the fury of the mob during the French Revolution of 1790, and it was decided to restore them to their place over the high altar of the Central House<sup>1</sup> of the Vincentians in the Rue de Sèvres. Three days before this ceremony took place Sister Catherine (as she was now called) saw her first vision. She says: 'I asked St Vincent to obtain for me all the graces I needed. . . . In the chapel of the Sisters I had the consolation of seeing St Vincent's heart above the little shrine where the relics are exposed. It appeared to me three consecutive days, each time in a different manner.' Simply and candidly she disclosed these visions to her Confessor, Father Aladel, a holy and prudent Vincentian. He, fearing deception, advised her to dismiss them from her mind, and told her not to speak of them to any person.

#### THE FIRST APPARITION

On the night of July 18, 1830, she was awakened from sleep by a voice calling her by her name, and she saw by the side of her bed a beautiful child about five years old, dressed in white, and shedding forth a light that fell on everything with a lovely radiance. Quietly he spoke to her, 'Come to the Chapel, the Blessed Virgin is waiting for you.' She arose, dressed hastily, and followed the child. . . . Entering the Chapel, she saw the candles on the altar lighted as if for midnight Mass. At the same moment Sister Catherine heard a slight noise like the rustling of a silk dress. Then a beautiful lady entered and seated herself on the left side of the sanctuary, in the

<sup>1</sup> The Église de Lazaristes.

place usually occupied by the Director of the Community. She wore a yellow dress and blue cloak.

The Virgin spoke to her and, anticipating the rising of the Commune, said, 'The Archbishop will die and the streets of Paris will run with blood.' This prognostication was eventually fulfilled, the Archbishop George Darboy, with many of his priests, being shot by the leaders of the revolt.

#### THE SECOND APPARITION

On November 27, 1830, Sister Catherine again saw the Virgin Mary, at 5.30 in the evening, in the Chapel:

She was dressed in a gold-coloured gown, very plain, high-necked, with flat sleeves. Her head was covered with a white veil, which floated over her shoulders down to her feet. Her hair was parted and confined in a sort of fillet trimmed with narrow lace. Her feet rested on a globe. Her hands, on a level with her waist, held another globe. . . . Suddenly her fingers were covered with rings of precious stones. Rays of dazzling light darted from them, and the whole of her figure was enveloped in such radiance that her feet and dress were no longer visible.

The Virgin told Sister Catherine that the globe on which her feet rested represented the world.

After a while an oval frame surrounded the Blessed Virgin on which was written in gold letters: 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.' Then a voice said to me, 'Get a medal struck after this model; those who wear it when it is blessed will receive great graces, especially if they wear it round their necks. Graces will abound for those who have confidence.'

Then the oval frame slowly revolved, and on the back of it was the letter 'M,' surmounted by a cross with a crossbar beneath it, 'and under the letter the Holy Hearts of Jesus and His Mother; the first surrounded by a crown of thorns, the second pierced by a sword.' Again her Confessor was sceptical and told Sister Catherine not to believe in the things she said she saw.

#### THE THIRD APPARITION

Within a few weeks, and again at the evening meditation, the Virgin appeared to Sister Catherine for the third time. This

time Our Lady, looking about forty years old, stood above the tabernacle. Once more she received the order to get the medal struck according to the model she had seen. Her Confessor, Father Aladel, was becoming less sceptical, but moved cautiously in the matter: 'He tested her to assure himself of the veracity of her statements, and sought the advice of many competent persons.' Being finally convinced that his penitent really did see the apparitions, he obtained the approval of the Archbishop of Paris, and the first 'Miraculous Medal' was struck in the same city two years later—in 1832. Statues of the visions were also made.

Catherine Labouré died on December 31, 1876, aged seventy. In May 1933 she was beatified, and it is part of the process of beatification that the body of the Saint be exhumed and examined by the ecclesiastical authorities:

When her coffin was opened the body of the Blessed Catherine was found incorrupt and most wonderfully preserved. Only where the cornette (Sisters of Charity are buried in their habits) touched the face, and where the habit touched one hand, was there any discolouration; and these marks on the face and hand were removed easily by washing. The body was just as it was when she died. Two old women, who were once children under her charge, at once recognized the body as that of Sister Catherine.

Her remains now rest in the Chapel of the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity in the Rue du Bac, Paris.

The beatification of Sister Catherine took place at St Peter's, Rome, on May 28, 1933, by Pope Pius XI. The ceremony must have been impressive:

There were present on the morning of that day in the vast Basilica of St Peter's, with kings and princes and presidents of states, eight thousand children of Mary Immaculate whom the Holy Father likened to 'a shower of snow fallen from heaven'; three thousand Sisters of Charity came from the ends of the earth.

Cardinals, bishops, and priests without number, and twenty-three relatives of Catherine also attended.

Many miracles have been credited to the 'Miraculous Medal,' and many miraculous cures have been claimed by its wearers.

The conversion of Alphonsus Ratisbonne, the Jew, was, it is stated, due to his wearing a 'Miraculous Medal.' A friend gave him one and, while wearing it, he entered (February 13, 1842) the Church of Saint Andrea della Valle, Rome. He, too, saw a vision. He said: 'I lifted my eyes . . . and, standing on the altar, tall, radiant, full of majesty and sweetness, appeared the Blessed Virgin Mary, such as she is on this medal. She did not speak, but I understood everything.'

Speaking of 'cures,' I can record a curious coincidence. On August 7, 1943, was published (in *Everybody's Weekly*) an article on Borley Rectory that I had written. On the same day a correspondent wrote to me about the article and his private affairs. A Roman Catholic priest advised him to wear a medal of 'the Blessed Catherine Labouré.' He did so, and he says in his letter: 'I think my personal affairs are better.' I must admit that I had never heard of Sister Catherine, or her medal. Eleven days later, at Borley, one is found. But everything connected with Borley is strange.

#### WHO LOST THE PENDANTS?

I have dwelt on the 'Miraculous Medal' at some length because (a) the story is intrinsically interesting; (b) the alleged miraculous origin of these plaques is also interesting; and (c) the fact that one was found under the 'house of miracles' at Borley is truly remarkable. And now a number of questions present themselves. To whom did the plaques belong? How did they become buried? When were they buried? What age are the plaques?

I think that some of these questions can be answered satisfactorily. First of all, it is remarkable that both the copper plaque and silver cream-jug were made about the same time as the Rectory was built—i.e., 1863. We cannot be certain about this, to a few years, but expert opinion gives the plaque as being 'about sixty years old,' though the cream-jug may be some twenty years older.

What is quite certain is that the plaque is at least as old as the Rectory, which was built over eighty years ago, and probably a little older; and I think that it, and the thin gold pendant, were dropped—and lost—by the Italian workmen whom the Rev.

Henry Bull employed to fix the fine Italian marble mantelpieces in the Rectory which is reproduced in Plate IV of *The Most Haunted House in England*. We do not know how long these men were working on the Rectory; whether they were brought over from Italy for the purpose, or whether they were travelling journeymen who happened to be in the neighbourhood. It is certain that they did work in the dining- and drawing-rooms, erecting the mantelpieces, and they may have worked on the foundations too. I think that it cannot be questioned that the plaques *were* lost when the foundations and the cellars of the Rectory were being built. The small, thin gold pendant may have hung on a watch-chain. I have lost more than one 'charm' in this way myself. The larger, copper pendant may have been suspended on a cord round a man's neck next to his flesh (as recommended by the Catholic Church). Nothing is more likely than that, in digging the foundations, the cord snapped and the plaque slipped down the man's clothes into the marl and was irretrievably lost. He would probably not discover his loss until he undressed at night, and the chance of his finding it the next day would be remote.

Upon my first examination of the Rectory, on June 12, 1929, my secretary and I crept along the joists under the eaves and we came across the following inscription painted on one of the rafters to which the bell levers were anchored: 'Bells hung by S. Cracknell and Mercur, 1863.'<sup>1</sup> It was an interesting discovery as it gave us the exact date when the house was built. Previously, no one seemed to be quite sure as to when it *was* built. Now, Mercur is a very uncommon name (I can find only one entry in the London Telephone Directory), and it occurs to me that it might be Italian. More probably it is of French origin, as there is—or was—a famous French noble family, the Seigneurs and Dukes of Mercœur. In fact, one of them—Philippe-Emmanuel de Lorraine, Duc de Mercœur (1558–1602)—had himself proclaimed Protector of the Roman Catholic Church in 1588. I understand that the mining township of Mercur, in Utah, U.S.A., was named after this family.

<sup>1</sup> Recorded in *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 35.

'Mercur' may be a corruption of 'Merceour,' and if the name was transplanted to England the anglicization of the word would be swift and inevitable. So I suggest that at least one of the 'Italian' workmen may have been a Frenchman named Mercur, and that it was he who lost the pendants. Undoubtedly the loser was a Roman Catholic, and the pendants are almost certainly of French workmanship. Mercur may have bought the pendants in this country, though they were manufactured in France, one with English lettering, for use by British nuns. Or he may have procured them abroad. There is nothing extraordinary in a man wearing such pendants, especially if Mercur *was* a devout Catholic and belonged to one of the Latin races. There is a possibility, of course, that the pendants never belonged to Mercur at all, but were the property of one of the men—perhaps an Italian or Irishman—who helped to dig out the cellars. Incidentally, Sister Catherine Labouré was still living when the pendants were lost. She died thirteen years after the Rectory was built.

One thing is quite certain—the copper pendant has no *direct* connexion with 'Marie Lairre' of the Planchette scripts (it will be remembered that she alleged she died in 1667) or with the human remains found near it, which undoubtedly are much more ancient. The copper plaque and the gold pendant may have been 'pointers' or 'indicators' only. As for the latter object, it seems impossible to fix a date as to when it was made, but it was probably lost at the same time as the plaque. And it probably belonged to the same person. If so, then it is doubtful if it was the property of 'Marie Lairre,' if she ever existed. But that is a possibility that cannot be ruled out, and as it was found near the fragment of skull, the owner of the skull might also have been the owner of the pendant. If so, it would undoubtedly have been worn round the neck. In this connexion it is interesting to compare my speculations (in the absence of concrete *facts*, we can do nothing but speculate; and if we do not speculate we shall get nowhere) with Lieutenant Ian Aitchison's psychometric impressions of the 'exhibits' recorded in Chapter XVII.

Well, that is all I can say about the pendants, except to record

that it was not the first time that a copper medallion, bearing the figure of the Virgin Mary, had been dug up in strange circumstances and in a strange place. In *Notes and Queries*<sup>1</sup> is recorded the finding of a similar object. It is an ancient seal, the size of a penny, but twice as thick. The design shows a monk kneeling before the Virgin and Child, with the legend, '†S. JORDANIS MONACHI SPALDINGIE.' It was found *buried under six feet of chalk* on the slopes of the Western Heights on the Bredenstone, near Dover. The Bredenstone is where the ceremony of installing the Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports used to take place. The seal is, perhaps, that of Spalding Priory, Lincolnshire, established in 1051. As Spalding is more than a hundred and fifty miles from Dover, the question arises, how did it get there? More especially, how came it to be buried under six feet of chalk? This point was raised in *Notes and Queries* and never answered satisfactorily. The seal is—or was—in the possession of Mr H. S. Boyton, St Martin's Place, Dover.

<sup>1</sup> London, May 21, 1910. (Eleventh Series, vol. i, p. 408.

## NEW LIGHT ON THE BORLEY HAUNT

By the REV. CANON W. J. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS, D.D.

[Upon my return from Borley in August 1943 I informed Dr Phythian-Adams of the results of our excavations at the Rectory, and asked him to comment upon them. He kindly consented, and his remarks are printed herewith. In his essay he has taken the opportunity of giving his views of the theory that Arabella Waldegrave is the nun-ghost.—H. P.]

THE striking discoveries made by Mr Harry Price and his friends in August 1943 take us a long step forward towards the elucidation of the mystery. At his request I set down what seem to me the necessary inferences to be drawn from the new data, in which I include with thankfulness the invaluable researches of Mrs Georgina Dawson into the past history of Borley and the Waldegraves. I propose to examine the problem afresh under two headings: *The Scene of the Murder*, and *The Identity of the Victim*.

I. *The Scene of the Murder.* The remains of the victim were found by Mr Price and his helpers three feet *down under the existing cellar floor* where the 'tank,' cleared by Mr Kerr-Pearse and covered later with a hatch-cover by Captain Gregson, had been inserted into this floor. I am not at the moment concerned with this remarkable confirmation of the wall-message, 'Well-tank-bottom-me,' but it is necessary to point out that there never actually was a filled-in well beneath this 'tank,' as Mr Price supposed.<sup>1</sup> The well and the tank were in different places. But the tank, being covered over, *looked like a well*, so the message was admirably designed to lead us to this spot. What the 'tank' was for I cannot imagine, but as it was lined with smooth

<sup>1</sup> See my remarks concerning this, pp. 237 and 238.—H. P.

concrete<sup>1</sup> it must have been of comparatively recent date, and this difficulty need not therefore delay us.

The point I wish to stress is the position of the remains *below a cellar floor*, because this makes it obvious that such a cellar existed<sup>2</sup> before the crime was committed, and this means that a house of some kind must have been standing on the site in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century. What, then, was this house? Mrs Dawson tells us that old maps (but how old?) show only two houses at Borley; the *Hall*<sup>3</sup> which was the seat of the Lords of the Manor and stood beside the river Stour, and the *Place* in its present position opposite the Rectory. She suggests, I think with reason, that since 'it is certain that there was a rectory at Borley in the sixteenth century,' it would 'most probably be on the site of the present building.' Later it apparently fell into decay and was replaced by another rectory which was occupied, *inter alios*, by the Herringhams; and finally the present, now gutted, building was erected by the Rev. H. D. Bull.

It would appear, then, first, that there never was a Waldegrave Manor on this site, as was very reasonably suggested by Mr Price. The 'Manor' house was Borley Place; and the seat of the Lords of the Manor, the Waldegraves, was Borley Hall. Secondly, if our assumption is correct, the only building which has ever occupied this site has been a rectory. Are we, then, faced with a clerical crime, or at least with one committed with the full knowledge and connivance of the contemporary rector? We cannot exclude this possibility, for even the Church has her black sheep; but in so small a community detection—or at the very least grave suspicion, not to mention scandal—could scarcely have been evaded, and the 'nun' seems to have walked about the garden quite openly. No one, moreover, is likely to welcome having the corpse of a murdered girl buried only three feet down under his cellar floor, and if he was the actual murderer he would

<sup>1</sup> Or it may have been lined with stone. As I state in Chapter XIV, the 'well' may have been used for catching the surface water.—H. P.

<sup>2</sup> The foundation walls of these cellars have been found (see Chapter XIV). They were built of two-inch bricks, proving that they were constructed some time before 1625. See note concerning these bricks at foot of p. 234.—H. P.

<sup>3</sup> Recently in the occupation of Mr Robert T. B. Payne. He died on October 11, 1944, in his eightieth year. He is buried in Borley Churchyard.—H. P.

be still less anxious to take so desperate a step. (I am speaking, of course, of the country, not of the town.) We must conclude, I think, that the rector of the time knew nothing about the murder, and this can only mean that he was not then occupying the Rectory, and was, indeed, in all probability not living at Borley at all.

It is here that I seem to find considerable significance in the notes compiled by Mrs Dawson on the Rectors of Borley (twenty). In 1660 a certain William Playne was appointed Rector by Philip Waldegrave *per curatores* (the patron being not of age?), but in 1662 *he went to Langenhoo*, another incumbency in the gift of the Waldegraves. He died in 1680, still Rector of Borley, and was succeeded by Thomas Muriell, who also *went to Langenhoo* (in 1681), though he was 'still officially at Borley' in 1700. For some reason the patronage was at this time in the hands of a certain John Fanshaw, who in 1700 appointed Robert Gooding to officiate at Borley, though he had 'no seat' there. Muriell died in 1709 and was succeeded in the regular way by Robert Goodwin, the patron being again Philip Waldegrave. Goodwin on his death in 1719 was succeeded by F. Perry (patron, Charles, Duke of Somerset, and Trinity College, Cambridge); and he too, though he lived till 1758 as Rector of Borley, cannot have resided there, for his work appears to have been done by Humphrey Burroughs from 1721 to 1757. Then on Perry's death (1758) Robert Morton was appointed Rector by James, Earl Waldegrave, but he also seems to have lived elsewhere (at Langenhoo, which he held from 1744); and the King's books give the value of the Rectory as *nil*. After this there is a long blank, till in 1808-09 the Ecclesiastical Index shows Borley Rectory as valued at £9. Finally, in 1841 comes the first of the two Herringhams.

Apparently, then, from 1662 to some unknown date at the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century the Rectory at Borley was either untenanted or occupied by some one other than the rector. The fact that it ultimately became uninhabitable and valueless suggests that the former hypothesis is the correct one; but this would not preclude the

possibility of its being used for some time after 1662 for more secular purposes—for the lodging, let us say, of some one brought over from France! And if it were known that the house would thereafter remain unoccupied there would be no serious risk in a grave beneath the cellar floor. Here, I admit, we are on delicate ground, but I must point out that it is at least a singular thing that both William Playne (1662) and Thomas Muriell (1681) were transferred to Langenhoo, so that for the space of some fifty years, if not more, the Rectory *could* have remained untenanted. Who the *curatores* were who acted for the young Waldegrave, and whether Fanshaw was one of them, I do not know; but since Langenhoo was in the Waldegrave gift, both they and he must have represented the interests of the family. If, then, a Waldegrave was responsible for the crime their action in transplanting these two rectors may assume a sinister significance (though the suggestion may have come from only one of them). By the time the *locum tenens* Gooding was appointed the house had apparently ceased to be habitable, so that whatever secrets it concealed might be considered safe for ever. (Where Robert Goodwin lived appears to be unknown. Is it possible that he was the Robert Goodwyn who was Rector of Liston in 1700, and that he combined the two parishes, as the present Rector does, from Liston Rectory?)

II. *The Identity of the Victim.* My original suggestion about this was that we ought to accept provisionally the unsought and unexpected information given by Planchette to Miss Helen Glanville and later supplemented to her, her father and brother, and Mr Kerr-Pearse.<sup>1</sup> The first message purported to give the name of the victim as Mary Lairre (or Larire or Larre), a novice who 'passed over' on May 17, 1667, and whose convent was 'Haiv.' The second message confirmed the date 1667, and added that Mary was French and that she was strangled by (or more strictly through the 'fault' of) a Waldegrave. Her convent was now given as 'Havre.'

Since then Mrs Dawson, in the course of her researches into the history of the Waldegrave family, has made a most interesting

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 160-162.

and exciting suggestion which, if true, completely rules out this 'disclosure.' She suggests that the Borley 'nun' is Arabella Waldegrave, the daughter of Henrietta, wife of Henry (?),<sup>1</sup> Baron Waldegrave of Chewton, and the granddaughter (through her mother) of Arabella Churchill and King James II. Arabella was born in 1687, was taken by her parents to France in 1688, and at the age of seven (in 1694) was entered as a pupil at the Benedictine Convent of Pontoise. For a time it was thought that nothing more was to be heard of her after this, but Mrs Dawson has now found out that she entered the novitiate, not at Pontoise (which is curious, because her aunt, Dame Ignatia, was a nun there at this time) but at some convent in Paris (possibly the Blue Nuns or the stricter Benedictine filiation from Cambrai, both of them English Houses). Later on, Mrs Dawson suggests, she became a spy, either for James II or for the English Court, and her activities became so dangerous to one or other of these parties that she had to be murdered—at Borley.

This is a most attractive hypothesis, and it has much at first sight to commend it. Arabella was a Waldegrave, Borley was the seat of Philip Waldegrave, her kinsman. Must not these two facts be connected? Furthermore, Henrietta, Arabella's mother, was expelled from the French Court on the charge of spying against James II. May not Arabella herself have taken to espionage? But let us reflect a moment. If Arabella disappeared when she was in the novitiate she must have been still a mere girl. Arabella (Ignatia) Fitzjames, her aunt, became a novice at Pontoise at the age of fifteen, and it is probable that Arabella herself would do much the same. But, even if she were a few years older than this, could she at such an age have become a spy; and not only that, but a spy of such importance that her enemies thought it wise to murder her?

Once again, why was she murdered at *Borley*? Her kinsman, Philip Waldegrave, was a staunch Roman Catholic. (So, in spite of all that had happened, was her mother.) How came it

<sup>1</sup> Collinson (*History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset*, 1791, ii, 117) gives Charles, not Henry, and says that he was the eldest son of Sir Henry Waldegrave, Bart. (d. Oct. 10, 1658), who was twice married and had thirteen sons and ten daughters!

about, then, that he allowed her to be quietly disposed of without raising a hue and cry? Is it suggested that she was spying upon *him*, and that he found it necessary to remove her? But this could only be because she had abandoned her religion *and we know that she had not done so*. The Borley writings asked for 'light Mass [requiem] and prayers'; the Borley victim wore a Roman Catholic medallion.<sup>1</sup> We can dismiss at once any idea that, if it was Arabella, she had taken service with a Protestant Government.

It will not do. One can imagine Arabella visiting the Waldegraves of Borley. One can even imagine her on a secret but unimportant mission. But that she should be done to death in what must have been the safest place for her in England, and that she should have been buried, of all places, under the cellar floor of Borley *Rectory*—this is too much to believe!

What became of her, then? How is it that this girl of noble birth and royal blood seems to have vanished without trace? Where one guess is as good as another, I make no apology for offering my own. It is not an exciting explanation: in fact, it is as old as the hills. It is that the 'mystery' of Arabella can be summed up as a *young man*! Consider the position: Here we have a schoolgirl brought up rather like Miss Twinkleton's young ladies, but, unlike them, with the prospect, piously encouraged by her family, of spending the remainder of her life within the walls of the Academy. If she is Arabella Churchill's granddaughter she may well feel other stirrings within her, and as she is not yet immured, a clandestine flirtation is still possible. It is discovered. General horror! Not only a young man, but from the Waldegrave point of view a most undesirable one! Speedy action follows. Arabella must be removed from this temptation, and the only way to do this is to remove her from Pontoise. So she is carried off to one of the English Houses in Paris, possibly the stricter Benedictine convent which was a filiation from Cambrai. There she continues to 'test her vocation,' and in due course enters the novitiate. But the stratagem fails. Where one can go another can follow; and where there is

<sup>1</sup> The thin gold pendant.—H. P.

a will there is a way of escape. Arabella vanishes with her undesirable lover, and from that day, so far as both her family and her convent are concerned, she is dead.

This explanation may be quite wrong, but I put it forward to show that there *need* be no very great mystery about the disappearance even of a Waldegrave! Such a family 'disgrace' (which may have been simply a *mésalliance*) would have been quite enough to consign the offender to oblivion; and I suspect that the convents of those days could have told many such a story, had they been willing to do so.

But whatever Arabella's fate may have been, it is (I submit) irrelevant to our present problem. So far I have been using general arguments, and I have cited only one piece of evidence from Borley itself. Now that evidence, as we have seen, shows that the victim was a Roman Catholic, but it also shows much more than this; it shows that she was *French*. For consider: we have the *French* medallion 'apports' (and now the *French* medallion in the grave). We have the broken-English messages: 'Please help get,' 'Light Mass and Prayers,' 'Well, tank, bottom, me'; and side by side with these we have the word 'trompée' written in the flowing hand of one who is using *her own language*. Finally (though this certainly sounds fantastic), we cannot ignore the story, reported to Mr Price since he wrote his book, of the disappearance and return of a *French* (French-English) dictionary!<sup>1</sup>

But is this conclusive against Arabella? For a time I felt constrained to admit that it might not be. If Arabella was brought to *France* at the age of one and put to school at seven in a *French* convent would she not grow up with more knowledge of the French language than of her own? It seemed that the possibility, however unlikely, could not be excluded, till I learned from Mrs Dawson's notes that the convent at Pontoise, though on French soil, was actually a branch of an English House transplanted to the Continent from England at the time of the Reformation. The nuns were English, the school was English: that is precisely why Arabella was sent there! In fact, so far as

<sup>1</sup> See Mr P. Shaw Jeffrey's experiences, related in Chapter VI.—H. P.

I can gather, these English convents (we have already mentioned two others) were simply fragments of England temporarily detached from the motherland (to which they have now all been restored). There is therefore no doubt at all that Arabella *cannot* be the Borley victim. She was an English girl, educated by English women, and it is inconceivable that she could not write her own language.

We come back, then, in the absence of other 'claimants,' to 'Mary Lairre'; and here I must point out the coincidence of the dates which connect her with Borley. If she was done to death in 1667 this happened just five years after the Rev. William Playne had removed to Langenhoo. *The Rectory was still habitable, and it was empty. It could be used, at any rate for a time, to house the foreigner—and it could be 'arranged' that it should remain empty when she was 'gone.'* I do not for a moment suggest that this is in any way conclusive. We do not yet know (and we may never know, though Havre is now accessible again) whether there was any such person as Mary Lairre. But I submit that the evidence, so far accumulated, is of sufficient weight to justify further researches along this line. In particular, apart from the French side, I would refer to the wedding-ring 'apports' (which can of course find no place in the Arabella-spy hypothesis). Nothing has happened so far which has shaken my first impression that this is as significant as any of the other clues which have been so strikingly confirmed. I do not believe that this tragedy was born in the murky fog of conspiracy, espionage, and intrigue. I believe that it was the climax of a more ordinary, more 'human' story in which love and greed or ambition came into fatal conflict. This story cannot have been connected, as I originally supposed, with the senior Waldegrave branch at Chewton; it must have had to do with some unknown member of the Borley Waldegraves, the descendants of that Nicholas who died in 1621.

## STRANGE OCCURRENCES IN A LONDON STUDIO

**A**S the historian of the Borley hauntings, it is my duty to record every incident connected with the Rectory that is brought to my notice. No matter how 'impossible,' 'unlikely,' or even 'outrageous' these incidents may appear, they must be included in the Borley *dossier*—provided, of course, that they are vouched for by responsible persons whose veracity and good faith cannot be questioned. The events that I am about to set forth are so remarkable that they deserve a chapter to themselves—if only a short one.

A month after my return from Borley I took the fragment of the skull, and other objects of interest connected with Borley Rectory, to the well-known fine-art photographers, Messrs A. C. Cooper, Ltd., photographers to the Royal Family, whose studios were in the heart of the West End of London. Messrs Cooper are famous for their photographic reproductions of Royal Academy pictures, *objets d'art*, old china, and so on. I knew the firm very slightly, and they had previously done a little work for me; I was introduced to them by the publishers of one of my books.

I called on Messrs Cooper, Ltd., on September 13, 1943. Those of my readers who are superstitious will note the day of the month. I saw the governing director of the firm, Mr A. C. Cooper, and told him what I wanted. He remarked that he had photographed some queer things in his time, but the 'exhibits' I showed him were, he said, the strangest that had been brought to him. Of course, I had to tell him the history of them, and it emerged from our conversation that he knew nothing whatever about psychical research, and—though he was not rude enough to tell me so—probably cared less.

The first mishap occurred when we were examining the portion of skull that I was showing him. Both he and I were

holding it, and it slipped out of our four hands. It fell on to the wooden floor of the studio and broke into four almost equal pieces. The skull certainly was brittle, but I was surprised that it should have broken so easily. Mr Cooper was very concerned, and remarked that during his twenty-five years' occupation of the studios no accident had occurred to anything of value entrusted to him. However, by means of gummed strips attached to the concave surface of the skull, we managed to join it together again, and made a fairly satisfactory job of it. Some of the cracks can be faintly seen in the photograph that I reproduce (Plate XVIII).

I left all the articles with him, asked him to do his best with them, and said I would call for them on the following day. As we were even then getting sporadic air raids over London, I did not want to leave the things there too long.

I called on Mr Cooper on the following morning, as arranged, and he had a curious story to tell me. He greeted me with the remark: 'Thank goodness you've come—the sooner your property is off my premises the better!' And then he told me what had happened. When I left him on the previous day he prepared to photograph the various objects. Then things began to happen. First of all, a thousand-guinea oil-painting fell off its easel on to the floor, when Mr Cooper was in the studio, but not near the easel. There was nothing to explain the fall. Fortunately, no damage was done. He told me that such a thing had never previously occurred during his whole business career. Later in the afternoon *another* painting fell off an easel when he was not near it, though he was in the studio. The picture was undamaged. He remarked that the odds against *two* paintings normally falling off their respective easels, for no particular reason, on one afternoon, and in the same studio, were astronomical. I agreed. Then—this same afternoon—he spoilt two batches of films because he omitted to put the necessary 'stop' in the lens of the camera—a thing he had never done before.

But perhaps the most remarkable incident concerned a clock. On his wall he had an old dark-room clock by means of which

he formerly timed the exposures of enlargements, etc. This clock would *not* go. It had not gone for ten years, and no 'tinkering' by Mr Cooper would make it go. Suddenly—on this same eventful afternoon—he heard the familiar loud tick that had not fallen on his ears for a decade. He looked up—the clock *was* going! It functioned for twenty minutes—and then stopped. And nothing would make it go again. There were a few other minor incidents, particulars of which I have forgotten. When Mr Cooper had finished his story I told him all about Poltergeists and their mischievous ways. I left him very interested, and very puzzled. I must emphasize that *I do not claim any relation* between Mr Cooper's temporary possession of the Borley 'exhibits' and events of that exciting afternoon. I am merely relating facts. When I was writing the title of this chapter I purposely used the word 'occurrences' and not 'phenomena.' Though I and others have had the Borley relics in our possession for varying periods, nothing untoward has happened to any of us; or if so I am not aware of it. And the great Rectory yard-bell (Plate XX) has swung in its cradle over my workshop at Pulborough for many months, but I have yet to hear one paranormal ring.

Unfortunately, Mr Cooper's troubles were not over. Although what happened later has, apparently, nothing to do with Borley, I feel I must give some account of his misfortunes, especially as I was slightly mixed up with them.

Five months after Mr Cooper's adventures in his studio I took him (February 23, 1944) some very rare pamphlets to be photographed. I wanted the title-pages reproduced for the purpose of illustrating my *Poltergeist over England*. The pamphlets were about Poltergeists. I visited his studio in the morning and asked him whether he could possibly do the work for me by the afternoon, in order that I could take the books home with me the same evening. I never left valuable material in London overnight if I could avoid it, on account of the possibility of air raids. And on this particular morning I had—with the late lamented Hitler—an 'intuition': I somehow felt that it was specially important that my pamphlets should not remain in town that night.



PLATE XX. THE GREAT BELL THAT HUNG IN THE COURTYARD,  
ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE RECTORY

Photographed August 30, 1943.

PLATE XXI. A CORNER OF THE RECTORY CELLAR WHERE HUMAN REMAINS WERE  
FOUND

The bricks have been replaced. Photographed January 5, 1944.

[See p. 247.]





I informed Mr Cooper of my anxiety about the books, and asked him to photograph the title-pages while I waited. Being very busy, he could not possibly do this, but said he would do the work during the afternoon, and if I called at four o'clock the books would be finished with, though I should have to wait until the following morning for the prints. This was quite satisfactory, and later in the day I called for my property.

Early morning of February 24 found me on my way to Mr Cooper's studios. As I approached the district where his business premises were—or rather had been—all I found was an area of rubble. Not only had his studios disappeared, *but I could not even find the street where they had stood the day before.* All had disappeared in a severe air raid during the night. I thought of my fortunate 'intuition,' and was glad that I had acted upon it. I am happy to record that no one was on the premises when Mr Cooper's studios were destroyed; and, having a duplicate set of apparatus at home, he was soon in business again in other premises. But his loss was serious. A day or two after the raid I was astonished to receive all the prints of my title-pages. Mr Cooper had taken the precaution of collecting them on the night of the raid, and took them home with him. Perhaps he too had an 'intuition'!

Having related the adventures of Mr Cooper while the Borley relics were in his possession, I will now tell how these same objects affected Lieutenant Ian Aitchison, a well-known Canadian psychometrist. For the uninformed reader, I will mention that psychometry, or tactile clairvoyance, is a faculty said to be possessed by persons capable of divining, by means of physical contact, the properties, character, or associations of a thing with which that thing has been connected. Personally, I believe in psychometry, and I have proved that a very few persons *do* possess the faculty—notably Mlle Jeanne Laplace, who, when handling a letter sent to me by the late Dr R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S., gave (when he was alive) fifty-three 'impressions,' forty of which were correct or reasonably correct. One prediction (twice repeated) was that Tillyard 'would die through a railroad or automobile accident.' The prediction was made in 1928 (*and published at the*

time), and on January 13, 1937, Tillyard was killed in a motor-car smash near Canberra, Australia, where he lived.<sup>1</sup>

In July 1944 Lieutenant Aitchison was visiting my friend Mr Sidney H. Glanville, mentioned so often in this report. Mr Glanville rang me up one afternoon from his home at Fittleworth to say that Aitchison was with him, and that they would like to test the Lieutenant by letting him psychometrize the Borley relics. So I sent them, and in due course I received their report. I have never met Lieutenant Aitchison.

The objects I sent to be dealt with included those 'apports' alleged to have spontaneously 'appeared' in Borley Rectory at different times during its history, and the skull, etc., that were dug up under the cellar floor. Lieutenant Aitchison had been informed of the general history of the Borley hauntings, and had probably read something of them in Canada, but had *not* been given details concerning any particular object.

Lieutenant Aitchison appears to have a curious technique when psychometrizing. With the object in his hand, he begins his 'impressions' in the third person, and then, without warning, assumes the personality of the person alleged to have been previously connected with the object—or sometimes this process is reversed. The relics were handed to him in the order described.

The first object handed to the Lieutenant was the French Revolution medal found at the Rectory in 1929.<sup>2</sup> His reaction was: 'Old man bent, something wrong with his right leg.' Then, placing the medal in his left hand: 'He is looking out towards a large building with castellated wall—no tower, and he is looking at it from a distance. He has a small beard. I have a feeling it is the last thing he ever saw.'

On the night of June 29–30, 1937, Group-Captain R. Carter Jonas and Flight-Lieutenant Caunter spent a night at Borley Rectory, and during one of their periodical rounds of the house, discovered on a cupboard shelf an old nail-file which was *not* there during an earlier inspection a short time previously.<sup>3</sup> It had 'appeared' in the interval. This nail-file was handed to

<sup>1</sup> For details, see my *Confessions of a Ghost-hunter* (London, 1936), pp. 220–225.

<sup>2</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231–232.

Aitchison, who said: 'Taken from a person who was drowned. A pond with very thick weeds round the edge and very isolated, but I am at the bottom of that pond. I didn't feel anything. I was pushed in. In other words, I was murdered. The nail-file has been taken from my body. I don't like that one.'

When handed the patinated 'Miraculous Medal' all that Lieutenant Aitchison said was: 'There seems to be a young girl and I am wearing this medal. The only thing I can say is that although I am very young, there is something tight round my waist—*very tight*.' I am afraid that the Lieutenant's reactions do not help us very much with our 'Italian workman Mercur' theory.

When the Lieutenant handled the child's Roman Catholic Confirmation medal found at Borley in 1929<sup>1</sup> he said, 'I have only a troubled, frightened feeling from it.'

The thin gold pendant really agitated the Lieutenant. The first time he picked it up he dropped it immediately with the remark, '*I want to throw it away!*' However, he finally held it in his hand and said, '*I want to get rid of it!* I feel very arrogantly defiant of some one. They want me to do something, and *I won't do it!* Whoever was wearing this had it round their neck—a girl—when they were feeling arrogantly defiant. They tore it off and threw it away. I see a small room, about nine feet by seven feet; standing with back to window looking at a door about nine feet away. Boards at side forming bed, and form on other side. That is the position and scene as I feel arrogantly defiant. There is a bit missed, and I am lying on those boards and some one is on top of me when I feel this medal, and I pull it off and throw it away. Very trying time!'

When Lieutenant Aitchison touched the jaw-bone his reaction was immediate and very definite: 'Florence. Happiness! I have a suggestion that I should start another place on my own, and I say yes. I begin to be doubtful, I don't know why. It wasn't strangulation, but she was right when she said strangulation: it was rape. Waldegrave did it: he didn't want her to start a new nunnery on her own—he wanted her for his mistress. She had

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

taken a vow that she would never have any intercourse with any man: it was forced upon her, and she fought. She does not know any more after the fight. As far as she knows she was buried in the cellar or small room she was in. She took off the medal because she had broken her vow: it was the medallion she got when she first went to the convent. Feeling of shame.'

Given both jaw-bone and skull, Lieutenant Aitchison said: 'She wants the rest of her remains found and buried properly, not necessarily in churchyard—but out in the open away from the Rectory. She knows nothing about anything else, or of the ring [the wedding-ring; see below]. She thinks she is French and seems to remember Queen Anne, but can't recall things clearly.'

The reader will remember that Mr Geoffrey H. Motion and I found, at midnight on May 9, 1938, a lady's gold wedding-ring in the Blue Room of Borley Rectory.<sup>1</sup> Though we had searched the room many times during that same day and evening, no ring was visible until just before our departure for London. The ring just 'appeared.' Well, this same ring was handed to Lieutenant Aitchison, 'who dropped it at once, shouted "Murder!" and refused to touch it again.'

So much for the psychometric history of the Borley relics. The reader now knows, from Lieutenant Aitchison's 'impressions' and reactions, that 'Mary Lairre' (though he did not mention her name, the implication is that he was referring to the nun of the Planchette scripts) met her death through being raped. She said, 'Waldegrave did it.' During the struggle she managed to tear off the small gold plaque that was suspended about her neck. The expression, 'Very trying time,' is a curious one.

The reference to Florence is also interesting. Assuming that the Italian city—and not a woman—was indicated, it supports our theory, as a 'clue' or 'indicator,' that an Italian workman was responsible for disturbing the jaw-bone, lying *in situ* under three feet of marl below the cellar floor. It is certain that Lieutenant Aitchison knew nothing about this theory. Another

<sup>1</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, pp. 140-143.

curious reference by the alleged 'Marie Lairre' was to her remains. She would like them recovered and reburied, 'not necessarily in the [Borley] churchyard, but out in the open away from the Rectory' of unhappy memories. This suggests that 'Marie,' still a staunch Catholic, had some qualms about being buried in an Anglican churchyard. As for the wedding-ring, the psychometrist's violent reaction, and his cry of 'Murder!' this is strong support for Canon Phythian-Adams's theory that 'Marie'—if such a person ever existed—was brutally done to death. A last comment: 'Marie' 'seems to remember Queen Anne.' This would be quite possible because Anne (1665–1714) was two years old when 'Marie,' as she alleges, was murdered in 1667, at the age of nineteen. The reference could not possibly be to Anne of France (1460–1522), eldest daughter of Louis XI, who, with her husband Pierre de Beaujeu, exercised a virtual regency during the minority of her brother, Charles VIII (1470–98), King of France. Charles's wife was named Anne, too.

Well, the reader must assess at his own valuation the testimony of Lieutenant Ian Aitchison's psychometric impressions. They are very interesting and thought-provoking, and add one more puzzle to the already long list associated with Borley Rectory.

## PLANCHETTE VINDICATED?

TO what extent were the clues and 'pointers' provided for us by the wall-writings, the Planchette scripts, the table-tipping information, etc., confirmed by the discoveries at Borley Rectory in August 1943—assuming there was any confirmation whatsoever? We will examine these clues in the order in which they are set out in Chapter XIII, bearing in mind that many of them were not in the possession of the investigators *until many months after* the Rectory excavations. I will put the positive results in italics.

First there is the wall message, 'Well-tank-bottom-me.' *The human remains were found at the bottom of the well-tank, or where it used to be; and the cream-jug was discovered at the bottom of a well.*

As to the 'pointing arrow' in the kitchen passage, it was first suggested by Mr Taylor that it might be a sign or indicator directing us to the well-tank and the remains. That is what it actually proved to be. *The arrow did point to the well-tank and the human remains.*

On October 24, 1937, the Glanvilles, A. J. Cuthbert, and M. Kerr-Pearse held a table-tipping séance at Borley Rectory, at which the alleged 'entities' said that 'Marie Lairre' was buried 'near the house,' 'near the path,' and that the 'grave was not more than three feet deep.' *The human remains were found 'near the house' 'near the path' (i.e., under the path or passage in the cellar), and the grave was exactly three feet deep.*

On October 28, 1937, at Streatham, Mrs Helen Carter (*née* Miss Helen Glanville), alone, received the following Planchette instructions: she was told to look in the well, 'the well in the cellar,' and, asked whether 'it' would be found in the well, the 'entity' replied, 'Yes, the well that has been filled in.' *It was in the round well in the cellar that the cream-jug was found; and in the 'filled-in' well-tank were discovered the human remains.* Actually, both well and well-tank had been filled in.

On October 30, 1937, at Borley, the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr S. H. Glanville used the Planchette, and the 'entity' 'Marie Lairre,' after declaring that she was 'murdered by Henry,' said her 'remains are near the wall.' *The fragments of skull, etc. were found very near the wall (footings or foundations) of the cellar passage.*

On October 31, 1937, at Streatham, with Miss Helen Glanville and three other sitters using the Planchette, the 'entity' signed herself 'Mary,' and said she was strangled by a Waldegrave, and that her remains could be found at the 'end of a wall.' *The remains were found at 'the end of a wall'—the wall of the cellar passage.* (See plan of cellar.)

From now onward the Planchette clues recorded by the Glanvilles and their friends in 1937 and 1938 *were not in the possession of any of the Rectory excavators*, including myself, who dug up the cellars on August 17 and 18, 1943. They had no knowledge of them until seventeen months *after* we had returned from our investigation of the Borley cellars. So whatever confirmation we can find in these clues is doubly interesting because we were quite unaware that they even existed.

On November 5, 1937, the 'entity' calling itself 'Joseph Glanvill' wrote that if the operators would go to Borley 'The truth will be found.' *Nearly six years later, at Borley, something was found that may indicate the truth.*

On November 20-21, 1937, at Borley, the Rev. A. C. Henning and Mr S. H. Glanville were told by the communicating 'entity' that a 'cup' was buried at the Rectory. This was later amplified to a 'chalice.' *A cream-jug was found at Borley.* A cup, chalice, or cream-jug have points of resemblance in general outline, and all are capable of containing liquid.

Later, at the same séance, 'Mary Lairre' said a 'piece of plate' was buried. It was 'still buried,' and should be dug up 'by a priest.' The sitters were told to dig 'by a brick wall.' *A piece of plate (the cream-jug) was found by a brick wall* (the round well was near a wall, or the brick wall of the well might have been meant), *and a priest (Mr Henning) was present when it was found.* *It was 'still buried.'*

Then 'Mary Lairre' said that her bones were buried near a

wall and added the word 'grave.' *The human bones were found near a wall, in what was thought to have been a grave.* At this same séance the 'entity' 'Henry Waldegrave' confessed that he killed Mary 'with his hands, in the crypt,' by which he must have meant the cellars of the Rectory.

At the Planchette séance of December 5, 1937 (at Streatham), 'Marie Lairre' communicated and said she would help the sitters to find the 'cup.' *The 'cup' (or cream-jug) was found.*

On December 12, 1937, at Streatham, with Miss Glanville and her brother as operators, the 'entity' 'Harry Bull' suddenly wrote 'Borley Rectory in the cellar there.' The message was repeated to him and confirmed as correct, and then he wrote: 'Yes. Is a cup buried under the floor one foot, down near the well.' The Planchette board was then placed over a map of the cellar, and the pencil made a cross over the spot where the round well was marked. *The 'cup' (i.e., cream-jug) was found under the floor-level 'down [near] the well,' in the round well as Planchette exactly indicated on the map.*

At Lancaster Gate, London, W.2, on December 14, 1937, Dr H. F. Bellamy and his wife and Mr S. H. Glanville and his son Roger Glanville, held a Planchette séance. The 'entity,' calling itself 'Joseph Glanvill' (the eminent English philosopher, 1636-80), communicated and was asked whether he could give the sitters some information 'which we don't know, but can prove afterwards.' The word 'Yes' was written, and the sitters were told definitely to 'look under the brick floor in the cellar.' Asked *where* in the cellar, the 'entity' wrote 'the well at Borley' and said that 'writing' would be found, mentioned the word 'missal,' and added in single letters the word 'P-e-n.' *Investigators did 'look under the brick floor in the cellar at Borley,' and found 'writing' (in the form of lettering on the pendants); and the letters 'P-e-n' can be taken to be an abbreviation of the word 'pendants.'*

Most important clues were received by Miss Glanville and her brother Roger at a Planchette séance held at Streatham on December 19, 1937. 'Henry' [Bull?] at once communicated and wrote 'Look under the flooring will well help.' This was taken to mean that if they looked under the cellar floor 'Henry'

would help to find something in the well. Asked *what* was under the flooring, the ‘entity’ wrote ‘Writing’ and, emulating the ‘Joseph Glanvill’ entity, wrote ‘P-e-n’ in single letters, confirming the information received five days earlier. Then the ‘entity’ continued: ‘The heap of bones will be found from the garden and the pond. . . .’ ‘Henry’ was asked whether he meant that the bones were removed from the pond and garden and reburied under the cellar flooring, and he said ‘Yes.’ Then he made the definite statement that the bones belonged to ‘Marie Lairre,’ and instructed the sitters to ‘Go to Borley and look under the cellar floor for the cup and the missal and you will have proof.’

In the above remarkable message—which, I reiterate, was not in the investigators’ possession until January 20, 1945 (*i.e.*, seventeen months *after* the objects had been found)—is the definite statement (*a*) that writing would be found, and the word ‘P-e-n’ added; (*b*) that it would be found under the cellar floor; (*c*) that ‘bones’ had been removed from the pond and garden, and reburied under the cellar floor; (*d*) that the bones belonged to ‘Mary Lairre’; (*e*) that the ‘cup’ would be found under the cellar floor; and (*f*) that we should have ‘proof.’

My comments are: (*a*) that writing (lettering) was found in the shape of the inscribed pendants (‘P-e-n’); (*b*) that they were found under the cellar floor; (*c*) that bones were found under the cellar floor; (*e*) that the ‘cup’ (cream-jug) was found under the cellar floor, *i.e.*, below the level of the floor, in the round well; and (*f*) that we obtained ‘proof’ of something. Certainly, no ‘missal’ was found, but that is not to say that it is not there. As regards (*d*), we have no proof that the bones belonged to ‘Marie Lairre,’ or that such a person ever existed. But we *have* proof that they belonged to a young woman.

On January 8, 1938, at Streatham, Miss Glanville, her brother, Squadron-Leader Roger H. Glanville, and Squadron-Leader A. J. Cuthbert had a séance, and again ‘Henry’ promised he would help. Then another ‘entity,’ ‘Jeanne Waldegrave,’ wrote: ‘I mean you to find much proof.’

Finally, we have the remarkable Planchette messages from the entity ‘Sunex Amures,’ received by Miss Glanville and her brother Roger on March 27, 1938, at their home in Streatham.

I was acquainted with this script and reproduced a portion of it at p. 164 of *The Most Haunted House in England*. I published it because of 'Sunex Amures's' threat to burn down the Rectory. As the reader knows, the Rectory *was* afterwards burned down. An equally significant statement in the message did not particularly impress me at the time, but it does now because, in the light of subsequent events, what 'Sunex Amures' wrote was striking in the extreme. He said: 'Under the ruins you will find bone of murdered [indistinct] wardens [?]. Under the ruins mean you to have proof of haunting of the Rectory at Borley [indistinct] game tells the story of murder which happened there.' My comment: '*Under the ruins* was found bone(s) of—and '*under the ruins*' was found proof of a probable murder. So the whole of this message from 'Sunex Amures,' his promises and his threats, have been implemented. That fact alone would justify us answering in the affirmative the query with which I head this chapter.

Whatever value we place on Planchette 'messages,' promises, statements, and especially proper names and places, the vast amount of information obtained by the Glanville family and their friends by this means is, in the aggregate, impressive. Of course, I have put the best interpretation I could on the various statements in order to support the Borley 'story.' Other interpretations are possible, in some cases, and the reader may prefer his own. But there they are, and no one can deny that the messages are both interesting and remarkable. So we will leave it at that.

## THE END OF THE RECTORY: THE END OF THE 'NUN'?

WRITING on June 1, 1945, on my return from a visit to Borley and Liston, I have to report that the Rectory is no more. Not one brick stands upon another, and the site is as clean as a swept floor. All the bricks in the cellar were removed, together with the round well (where the cream-jug was found). Nothing unusual was discovered, but then no one was looking for anything unusual. The cellar floor was removed, but the marl under it was not dug. The cellars have now been filled in.

I interviewed Miss Woods, the daughter of the new owner, who gave me the latest information concerning the end of the Rectory. There are few 'relics' of the Rectory that have survived. As the reader knows, the great yard-bell hangs in my garden, but that is about all. I was curious to know what had happened to the two ornate Italian inlaid marble mantelpieces that stood in the drawing-and dining-rooms. I was especially interested in the fate of the rather sinister-looking monkish mantelpiece that adorned the dining-room. I inquired, and Miss Woods told me a curious story about them. The mantelpieces were carefully removed and put on one side. Next day they were found smashed to pieces and one of the monks' head was missing. The incident was ascribed to 'mischievous boys.' I will not suggest Poltergeists, but I think it is probable that souvenir-hunters were the culprits. I am sorry about the 'monk's head' mantelpiece (Plate IV, *The Most Haunted House in England*) as I had a sort of curious affection for it. I am sorry it has gone.

Miss Woods told me that much of the material from the Rectory had been bought by farmers for the foundations of their hayricks and other purposes, and the rubble had been used for making the runways of some of the many American airfields in the district. Mr Eric G. Calcraft, the photographer, of Bulmer, informed me that he was building a garage from Rectory

materials, which included some eleven-inch oak beams. (The Rectory was exceptionally well built.) Mr Calcraft tells me that he is now waiting to see whether 'anything happens' when the garage is completed.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Rectory has gone, the four rooms over the stables (where Mr and Mrs Edward Cooper had their exciting nightly adventures; and in which Mr and Mrs Gilbert Hayes heard the strange but invisible footsteps described in Chapter V), euphemistically termed 'the cottage,' are happily still with us. They now form a real cottage, with six rooms and a bay window, this detached unit having been altered and added to. Perhaps the resident 'entities' will resent the alterations and become active again. We shall see.

Towards the end of 1943 it was apparent that the Rectory—or the ruins—was about to change hands once more. I knew that Captain W. H. Gregson was trying to sell it; in fact, the last time I saw him (August 18, 1943) he mentioned that, as he contemplated going abroad, he would like to get rid of it. He suggested my buying it. But the same difficulties that prevented my acquiring the house in 1938 (when it was in perfect condition and undamaged) operated when Captain Gregson offered the place to me in 1943: I lived too far away from the Rectory and could not look after it. I had a real affection for the place—hideous though it was—because I had spent so many exciting hours there; and the stories of its hauntings sustained my interest for more than fifteen years. It is a pity that the Rectory, even in its decay, was not preserved for posterity as a tangible memorial to the work that has been done there by so many of my investigating colleagues and myself, over so long a period. In an article, 'Strange Tale of Borley,' which was published in *Truth* (September 27, 1940), the writer summed up how I felt—and still feel—about it: 'The remains of Borley should surely be taken over as a national monument—a tribute to a spirit of

<sup>1</sup> A curious story comes to me as this book goes to press. A man near Sudbury recently ordered a brick garage to be erected on his property. The workmen made a perfectly good job of it, and it was roofed in the usual way. The morning after the men had completed their work the garage was found flat on the ground. It had disintegrated in the night! Upon inquiry, I found that the bricks used were 'second-hand reds.' Borley Rectory was built of red bricks.



PLATE XXII. ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE RECTORY, APRIL 5, 1944

Note brick poised in mid-air against black background (right) of passage entrance.

Compare Plate XXIII and text. Photographed April 5, 1944.

*By courtesy of David E. Scherman*



scientific inquiry which can brave the most eerie terrors of the supernatural in order to arrive at a particle of truth.' *How I agree!* But, alas! the time is not yet when either the nation or official science is sufficiently interested in psychical research to provide money for such a purpose. But the day *will* come—as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. Well, I have lost an old friend, though my long connexion with the Rectory brought me many new ones.

When the two Oxford undergraduates, Harry Marshall and J. H. Russell, visited Borley in January 1944 the Rectory was in process of being demolished, which perhaps accounted for the fact that the phenomena they recorded were not more impressive.

Three months later, on April 5, 1944, I visited Borley in order to inspect the demolition work for myself. One reason why I went was because I had been asked by *Life*, the famous American pictorial magazine, to do an article, 'Haunted England.' For illustrating this article, the London editor required photographs of various alleged haunted houses, including Borley Rectory. So on the date I have mentioned Mr David E. Scherman, the *Life* photographer (and an accredited war correspondent to the United States Army); Miss Cynthia Ledsham, the researcher and archivist attached to Time and *Life*, Ltd., publishers of *Life*; and I, all journeyed by car to Borley in order to take the pictures. Fortunately, it was a sunny day, and how successful our trip was can be judged by Mr Scherman's magnificent photographs reproduced in this volume.

Well, I must say I had a shock—or more accurately, we had a shock—when I saw the rapidly dwindling ruins: only the back portion of the house (leading to the kitchen quarters) was standing. The cellars (they can be seen in the left foreground of the photograph I reproduce, Plate XXII) were open to the sky where they had not been filled in, and the wreckage of this large—if ugly—Rectory was pathetic to behold. However, Mr Scherman photographed what was left of the ruins, because that is what we were there for. But we were disappointed that demolition work was so far advanced.

## 'THE LAST PHENOMENON'?

One strange incident enlivened our visit, and puzzled us for the rest of the day. It concerned the photograph of the ruins taken by Mr Scherman. He was using a miniature camera of American make, and in order to embrace the whole of the ruins he had to stand at least one hundred feet away from them, as the lens he was using was not a very wide-angled one. Miss Ledsham and I stood by his side, watching the proceedings.

As Mr Scherman pressed the trigger which operated the shutter mechanism of his camera lens a brick, or part of a brick, suddenly shot up about four feet into the air in front of what remained of the kitchen passage, just below the bathroom passage. The three of us saw it, and, as I said, we were at least a hundred feet away from it. We all laughed and called it 'the last phenomenon,' and said the Poltergeists were 'demonstrating' in honour of our visit. We walked over to the passage, where there were many bricks lying about. I picked up several, and all appeared normal. No string or wire was attached to any of them, and we saw no workmen at all on that side of the Rectory. As I say, the incident puzzled us, and I personally soon forgot about it.

A few days later Mr Scherman sent me the proofs of the photographs he had taken. They were in the form of small contact prints from the original negatives, two and a quarter inches square. The pictures were perfect, and I complimented Mr Scherman upon his skill. Then, on the telephone, he asked me if I had noticed anything about the photograph of the ruins. I said no, and he then pointed out that against the dark background of the passage could be seen a tiny white pin-point. It was the brick! Without knowing it at the time, Mr Scherman opened his shutter at the fraction of a second when the brick was poised in mid-air. In proof of what a rapid exposure he gave the picture, there is no sign of movement of the brick in the photograph.

For the purpose of illustrating this book, Mr Scherman kindly sent me ten-inch-by-eight-inch enlargements of his photographs,

and, of course, in the picture of the ruins (Plate XXII) can be seen the whitish brick against the black background of the kitchen passage. At my suggestion, Mr Scherman sent me a very much enlarged picture of the 'flying brick' (which I reproduce as Plate XXIII) and the passage against which it was photographed. The rectangular shape of the brick is plainly visible. More important, it can be clearly seen that nothing is attached to the brick. By the way, none of the pictures taken by Mr Scherman has been retouched in any way, and this applies to every photograph in the book.

It is worth noting that the place where the brick suddenly shot up was formerly part of the kitchen passage—focus of many phenomena, and on the walls of which appeared at least two 'messages.' One of them was 'Marianne-Light-Mass-Prayers.' And in the kitchen passage (see Plan II) was the door leading to the sewing-room, in which many manifestations occurred both before and after the fire. It is interesting that the brick should have been levitated at this precise spot. If, indeed, this was a genuine paranormal phenomenon, then we have the first photograph ever taken of a Poltergeist projectile in flight.

#### OTHER STRANGE INCIDENTS

The levitation of the half-brick was not the only strange incident connected with the demolition of Borley Rectory. In the *Suffolk Free Press* for May 24, 1944 (*i.e.*, seven weeks after our visit), is the following editorial paragraph. It is headed 'Queer.'

I understand that the fire-ruined Borley Rectory, which was reputed to be the most haunted house in England, is being (or has been) demolished and the bricks carted away for rubble. The grounds, too, in which the ghost of the nun is said to have walked, are being cleared. I heard an interesting story the other day which supports the idea that there is always something queer about the place. A local firm was engaged in felling some trees, and 'everything seemed to go wrong.' Three axes broke in the course of the work; one man received a shoulder injury; and two trees which were roped and cut so as to fall into the grounds, fell into the road instead, the ropes breaking, and a tractor had to be fetched to haul the timber off the road.

It is interesting to note how the value of the Rectory and/or its ruins fluctuated. In 1938 the house, in perfect condition, with, I think, about three acres of ground, was offered to me for £500, freehold, together with the 'cottage.' It was then insured for £3500. Then it was purchased by Captain Gregson, and I imagine that he too bought it at the price I have mentioned. Then came the fire—and the war, when prices of everything soared and materials (especially timber) became almost unobtainable except under priority permit.

On September 14, 1943, Captain Gregson wrote to me to ask if I knew of any psychic enthusiasts, with means, who would buy the ruins for their sentimental interest and as a memorial to scientific psychical research—thus echoing the pious hope, expressed by *Truth*, which I mentioned a page or so back. I agreed with him that the Rectory should not be lost to posterity, but I knew of no one who was 'enthusiastic' enough to pay the £1100 that the Captain was then asking for the ruins. He thought that perhaps some rich American would buy it. This might have been possible before the war.

The next news I heard about the Rectory was that it had been sold to a local man. The price mentioned by my informant was £560. If, in fact, this sum is correct then the man got a bargain. In addition to the four-roomed 'cottage' over the stables, and the large yard and grounds, the building material extracted from the ruins must alone have been worth the money, owing to scarcity.

Will another building ever be erected on the site where the Rectory once stood? Of course, I cannot say, but I think it is very doubtful. With the parish of Borley combined with its near neighbour, Liston, there is now no need for a priest's house in the former village. Liston Rectory (Plate XXV) is only a mile or so away, and Borley-cum-Liston can be—and is—satisfactorily cared for by one incumbent. And apart from all other considerations, Queen Anne's Bounty will never, I am certain, build a new rectory on or near the site of the old one. If they do it will *not* be one containing thirty-five rooms! The ecclesiastical authorities, having got rid of one 'troublesome' house,

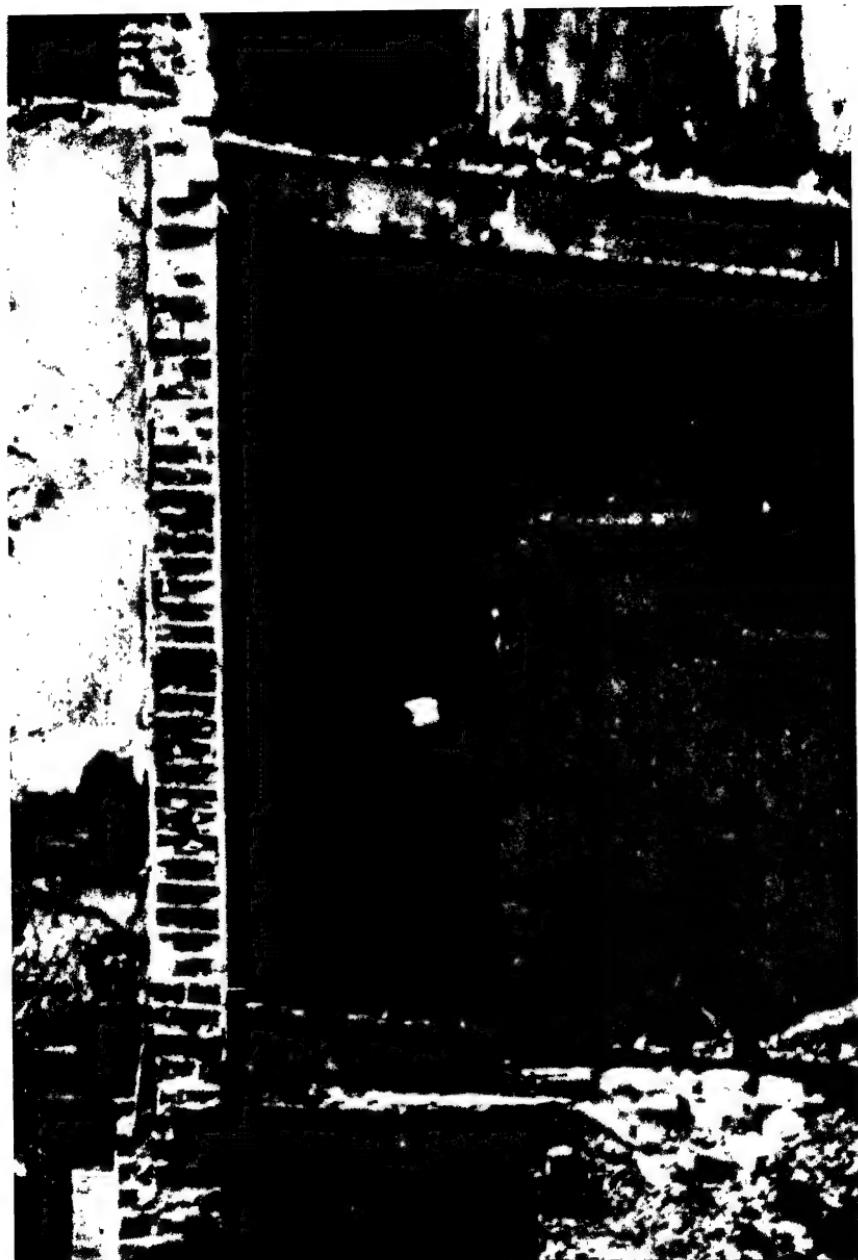


PLATE XXIII. ENLARGED CENTRE OF PLATE XXII, SHOWING BRICK POISED IN MID-AIR,  
AGAINST BLACK BACKGROUND OF PASSAGE ENTRANCE

See text. Photographed April 5, 1944.

*By courtesy of David E. Scherman*



are not likely to tempt the Poltergeists by erecting another near the old site. A private person might choose the 'haunted' site for his residence, but even that is unlikely. Land is cheap and plentiful in the Borley district, and anyone desiring to build in the neighbourhood would have little trouble in finding a suitable plot *without* a 'history.' Unless, of course, he happened to be a psychical researcher! (But see postscript at p. 293).

#### PHENOMENA BECOMING WEAKER

But even the grounds of Borley Rectory may remain 'active.' On the twenty-fifth—and last—visit to Borley by the Cambridge Commission on July 22, 1944, the Rectory was even then non-existent, and the investigators were driven to take shelter in the old summer-house in order to have a roof over their heads. As we have seen in Chapter IX, phenomena were not wanting. True, they were only raps; but a paranormal rap is, in its way, as interesting as, and perhaps even more valuable than, a paranormal 'figure.' And did not Mr and Mrs Gilbert Hayes have some exciting hours (see Chapter V) *in the grounds*? So who shall say that the extinction of the Rectory means the end of the phenomena? Personally, I should hesitate to make such an assertion. Though the 'nun' has been laid to rest, the Poltergeists (in all probability) still remain.<sup>1</sup>

It is undeniably true, however, that during the past year or so (I am writing this in June 1945) phenomena have become weaker and less frequent. If the 'nun' was responsible for the manifestations, then the fact of the Masses said for her repose, and that her alleged remains have been given Christian burial, may have brought consolation and relief to the spirit which we

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps as some proof of this Dr W. G. Shakespeare, of West Malvern, Worcestershire, sends me the following account of an interesting experience. In a letter dated September 20, 1945, he says: 'I thought you might be interested to hear the result of my visit to Borley last week-end, when my son (aged 15) and I camped out by the site of the ruins. We saw nothing out of the ordinary, but on the Monday morning at about 3 A.M. I was awakened by hearing a distinct *tap, tap, tap, tap, tap*—not very quick in succession but evenly spaced. I could not tell from what direction it was coming, and was just getting out of my sleeping-bag to investigate when it stopped. I did not wake my boy as I thought he was asleep. Later on, when it was light, he told me that he too had heard the tapping but had not wakened me as he thought I was asleep. You will think that we did not show much enthusiasm as regards watch-keeping, but we had waited up till the early hours on two successive nights!'

call 'Marie Lairre.' Several of these Masses have been said in various parts of the country. I have details of only two: one at Oxford and another (the first, I believe) at the beautiful Roman Catholic Church of S. Philip Neri, Arundel, Sussex. On October 29, 1943, the Rev. Father John Wright, of S. Philip's, wrote to say that 'Mass is being said here to-morrow morning for the repose of the soul of the good lady'—the 'Borley Nun.' It was a Requiem Mass, as was so often desired by the 'entity' communicating through Planchette scripts and the poignant 'wall messages.'

#### THE LAST RITES

In a further attempt to carry out 'Marie Lairre's' wishes and prayers, and further to console and comfort her spirit, I decided to re-inter the human remains found under the cellar floor, together with most of the alleged apports and other objects connected with the Borley case. I argued that even if the bones had no connexion at all with the 'nun' the proper place for them was in consecrated ground—no matter to whom they once belonged. As for the 'Miraculous Medal,' the pendants, etc., if there is any conceivable link between them and 'Marie,' then, I thought, they should be buried with the skull and jaw-bone. I asked the Rev. A. C. Henning to give the remains of the alleged 'Marie Lairre' Christian burial, thus fulfilling her wishes, so often expressed. He kindly consented to do this.

On Tuesday, May 29, 1945, I journeyed to Borley, where I was again the guest of Mr Henning, at Liston Rectory (see Plate XXV). I took with me the fragments of skull and jaw-bone, with the pendants, etc. All were contained in a well-made and dovetailed cedarwood casket, measuring five inches by four. What I did *not* put in the casket were (*a*) the cream-jug found in the round well; (*b*) the gold wedding-ring picked up in the Blue Room; and (*c*) the nail-file that 'appeared' during an observational period of some of my colleagues. I could not visualize any conceivable direct connexion between the cream-jug and/or the ring with the 'nun.' Admittedly, they were 'pointers' (as I have suggested elsewhere), but, I think, that is all. Also, as the ring

and jug are of some intrinsic value, their burial might have tempted some unscrupulous person to disinter the casket.

In the casket was placed a brass tablet on which was engraved the date on which the human remains were found, and the place; and the date on which they were reinterred. Before nailing on the lid of the casket Mr Henning placed his visiting-card with the objects. I chose cedar for the casket, as the wood is immune from the attacks of insects and other corroders.

It was decided to re-inter the remains in Liston Churchyard. This was more convenient for all concerned, and there were other reasons which prompted us to bury them there, rather than at Borley, one and a half miles away. The 'nun' did not specify Borley, or even consecrated ground. In fact, she did not even stipulate a Roman Catholic burial-place: merely Christian burial.

So early in the evening of May 29, 1945, all that remained of the supposed 'nun' was laid to rest. At any rate, the remains belonged to a young woman—of that we are quite certain.<sup>1</sup> It was a glorious evening, mild, windless, and with the sun pouring down on us. The sexton had dug the hole earlier in the day. There were present the Rector of Borley-cum-Liston and Mrs Henning (with their young son, Stephen); Mr Eric G. Calcraft, who, for the purpose of our records, took photographs of the proceedings (Plate XXIV); the sexton; and myself. A few puzzled village children (there are only fifteen houses at Liston) could be seen peering through the hedge on the far side of the churchyard.

It was a simple and impressive little ceremony. In his appropriate robes, the Rector recited the following prayer, 'Commemoration of the Faithful Departed,' from *The Missal*:<sup>2</sup>

Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons: we humbly commend the soul of Thy servant into Thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour; that whatsoever defilements she may have contracted in this miserable and naughty world being purged and done away, she may be

<sup>1</sup> See expert opinion concerning jaw-bone, Chapter XIV.

<sup>2</sup> Published by Mowbray, London.

presented pure and without spot before Thee; through the precious blood and merits of Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Then came another prayer from *The Missal*, expanded from *Gelasian Sacramentary and Queen Elizabeth's Primer* (1559):

Almighty, everlasting God, to whom no prayer is ever made without hope of Thy mercy: be gracious to the soul of Thy servant, now departed this life, that, being loosed from the bonds of sin and death, she may, with all Thy people, be satisfied from Thine eternal joys; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then came the Committal, the service concluding with the Grace. The sexton then filled in the hole and replaced the turf.

The casket was lowered into the grave at 5.42 P.M. B.D.S.T. I noted the exact minute for the following reasons: (a) In case some one connected with the Borley hauntings recorded a phenomenon as having occurred at that precise moment; (b) in case we should get a repetition of what happened when another skull, connected with a Poltergeist infestation, was interred in a churchyard. I have already referred to this case in Chapter I, a case that has some correspondences with the Borley hauntings.

Briefly, there were some skulls at Timberbottom Farm, Bradshaw, near Bolton, possessed for generations by the Hardcastle family of Bradshaw Hall, Bolton, Lancashire. Periodically there were Poltergeist disturbances at the farmhouse, and the grandfather of Colonel Henry M. Hardcastle (who sent me the account) decided to give the skulls Christian burial. There were two skulls: a normal-sized male specimen, and a much smaller one belonging to a woman. The skulls were duly buried, and *immediately* the most violent disturbances were witnessed at the farm. These persisted, so the skulls were dug up again and set up on the family Bible—where they remain to this day. The manifestations at once ceased, at least for a long time. Then an accident occurred to the small skull, and again there was pandemonium at the farm.<sup>1</sup> For full details of this

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written I have acquired a copy of the excessively rare privately printed history (*The Bell Witch* [Nashville, Tenn.], 1934) of the famous 'Bell witch.' The 'witch' is—or was—a talking Poltergeist that infested the Bell family who, for generations, have occupied the Bell Farm, Robertson County, Tennessee. The 'entity'

most interesting story, the reader should consult my *Search for Truth* (pp. 224-225). That, then, is why I took particular notice of the exact minute we interred the fragments. Up to the time of writing I have heard of no incident that could be linked up with the Liston burial.

I have said that 'Marie Lairre' did not stipulate a Roman Catholic burial or burial-place. Actually, however, there *was* a slight connexion between the Liston service and the Catholic faith, to the extent that the second prayer I have quoted is attributed to Pope Gelasius I (492-496) and is from his *Liber Sacramentorum*, parts of which, at least, he certainly composed. Those readers who are interested in the question should consult H. A. Wilson's *Gelasian Sacramentary* (Oxford, 1894).

#### THE MISSAL: ANOTHER 'POINTER'?

When I opened the book from which the Rev. A. C. Henning extracted the prayers he recited at the Liston burial, and found that its title was *The Missal*, I immediately thought of the references to a 'missal' in the Planchette scripts. (See Chapter XIII.) Certainly we found no missal. But the term 'missal' can be interpreted in at least two ways. What we were hoping to find under the cellar floor was an illuminated black-letter or manuscript book of early date. Another meaning of the word relates to the service of the Mass or Mass-book. And here we were using a missal in the latter sense at the nun's burial. Is it possible that the word 'missal' in the Planchette scripts referred to the Mass-book, which 'Marie Lairre' desired to be used when

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first appeared in 1817, but has returned intermittently from time to time. In 1934 Charles Bailey Bell, M.D., the present head of the family, compiled a complete account of the infestation from the family records and first-hand evidence from surviving witnesses. The report was issued to his relatives, etc. I mention it here because part of the story (pp. 99-101) concerns a jaw-bone which was unearthed on the farm by some of the Bell boys, who played with it, knocking out one of the teeth, which was lost somewhere in the house. Their father made them rebury the bone. The Poltergeist was furious and said: 'I am the spirit of a person who was buried in the woods near by, and the grave has been disturbed, my bones disinterred and scattered, and one of my teeth was lost under this house, and I am here looking for that tooth.' A search was made for the missing molar, which was never found, and the phenomena increased in violence—just as it did at Timberbottom Farm. The 'Bell witch' case, which has many correspondences with Borley, is a truly amazing one, and fully documented.

her remains were found and given Christian burial? If so, then it is extraordinary that such a book *should* have been used, because Mr Henning did not know of the Planchette references, and I did not know that he was going to use such a book. I regard it as another 'pointer' or 'indicator,' of which we have had so many in this case.

#### DEATH OF THE REV. L. A. FOYSTER

When I was at Liston during my last visit in June 1945, I learned with regret that the Rev. Lionel Algernon Foyster, who was Rector of Borley from 1930 to 1935, had passed away. He died at Rendlesham, four miles from Woodbridge, Suffolk, on April 18, 1945. Mrs Henning, who told me of his death, remarked that it was a melancholy coincidence that he should have died on the very day on which she gave a talk on the Borley hauntings to the Cambridge Women's Luncheon Club (see Chapter IV). Present at the luncheon was Mr Foyster's cousin, who confirmed that all the things of which Mrs Henning spoke had actually taken place.

Psychical researchers—myself especially—are much indebted to Mr and Mrs Foyster for so faithfully recording the Borley phenomena. It will be remembered that Mr Foyster kept a day-to-day diary (some extracts from which are reproduced in this volume) of the manifestations. And it was during Mr Foyster's incumbency that so many strange things happened at the Rectory, especially during the first fifteen months of his residence there. This was the period of the pathetic wall-writings; the most violent Poltergeist phenomena; and the appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of many curious objects—some of which had never been seen before. It was during this period, too, that Dom Richard Whitehouse, O.S.B., witnessed the amazing display of the bottle-smashing 'entities,' etc.

Now that 'Marie Lairre' has received Christian burial, will the 'nun' phenomena completely cease? Is her unquiet spirit now at rest? I believe that both queries can be answered in the



PLATE XXIV. THE BURIAL OF THE 'NUN,' LISTON CHURCHYARD, MAY 29, 1945

The Rev. A. C. Henning is lowering the casket. Mrs Henning, son Stephen, and the author are at the graveside.



affirmative.<sup>1</sup> To the best of our knowledge and ability, we have complied with all her requests: the finding of her supposed remains, the Requiem Mass, the prayers, the holy water, the incense, and the solemn and Christian burial in consecrated ground—on the eve of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

There is one thing more we can do for her (and I am sure my readers will join us in this): we can inscribe on our hearts and memories, if not on her tomb, that—for her—most befitting of all epitaphs:

### Requiescat in Pace

*P.S.* Too late to be included in the body of this chapter is the following information concerning the future of the Rectory garden site. It is extracted from the *Evening News*, March 14, 1946, and is part of a report of an interview with Mr and Mrs Tom Gooch:

Mr Gooch is a farmer; his wife is a school-mistress in a girls' church school in the next village [to Borley]. Between them they have just paid £300 for part of the land on which the haunted Rectory stood before it was burnt down (mysteriously, of course—nothing happens normally at Borley) in 1939. On the five acres of orchard and garden, across which the ghostly figure of a nun is said to walk, the Gooch's, a matter-of-fact couple, intend to build their home. . . . Questioned closely, Mrs Gooch admitted to having heard 'noises' and witnessed some rather odd goings-on in the days of the old Rectory. She has never seen the headless coachman, but once, when she was attending a church council meeting in the Rectory, a picture fell off the wall and bits of brick and twig came hurtling down the chimney.

Assuming that the above information is correct, the Nun's Walk will be built over, and the famous summer-house (Plate IV) is likely to disappear. People are speculating as to what—if any—manifestations will occur in Mr Gooch's new home.

<sup>1</sup> Many phenomena (in the Rectory grounds) have been reported to me as this book was going through the press, and since Mr Henning buried the 'nun's' remains. (See pp. 74, 75, 89, 90, and 287.)

## BORLEY AND BALLECHIN

I CANNOT close this volume without drawing attention to another famous Poltergeist haunting—that of Ballechin House, Strathtay, Perthshire. The reason I do so is because of the amazing correspondences or parallelisms that exist between the two cases. In any history of Borley Rectory these resemblances should be pointed out. Some day, when we know more about these things, the similarity between manifestations occurring at the same time, but hundreds of miles apart, may perhaps help us. But in order to make these similarities intelligible to the reader I must give a short history of the Ballechin hauntings, an account of which first appeared in *The Times*. It started a long and acrimonious correspondence about what really happened at a 'haunted house-party.'

Ballechin was owned by a Captain J. M. S. Steuart. It is a fairly modern house, but is built on the site of a much older residence. It was after the place had been systematically investigated by a group of psychical researchers in the spring of 1897 that *The Times* controversy began. Under the title of 'On the Trail of a Ghost,' *The Times* published (June 8 to 24, 1897) a series of letters from certain sceptics who had *not* been present during the investigation; and printed the personal narratives of others who *had* experienced the phenomena, and who had been thoroughly convinced of their paranormality.

The story of how Ballechin House came to be investigated is interesting. In 1892 John, third Marquess of Bute (who was deeply interested in such things and was a well-known psychical researcher), happened to meet a Jesuit priest, Father Hayden, S.J., who had been staying at Ballechin. The house was completely furnished, though the Steuarts were not in residence. Father Hayden had an extraordinary experience, which he related to Lord Bute. His story is as follows:

I went to Ballechin on Thursday, July 14, 1892, and I left it on Saturday, July 23. So I slept at Ballechin for nine nights, or rather *one* night, because I was disturbed by very queer and extraordinary noises every night except the last, which I spent in Mr Steuart's dressing-room. At first I occupied the room to the extreme right of the landing; then my things were removed to another room. In both these rooms I heard loud and inexplicable noises every night, but on two or three nights, in addition to these, another noise affrighted me—a sound of somebody or something falling against the door outside. It seemed, at the time, as if a calf or big dog would make such a noise. Why those particular animals came into my head I cannot tell. But in attempting to describe these indescribable phenomena I notice now I always do say it was like a calf or a big dog falling against the door. Why did I not hear the noises on the ninth night? Were there none where I was? These are questions the answers to which are not apparent. It may be there *were* noises, but I slept too soundly to hear them. One of the oddest things in my case, in connexion with the house, is that it appeared to me (a) that somebody was relieved by my departure; (b) that nothing could induce me to pass another night there, at all events alone, though in other respects I do not think I am a coward.

Father Hayden, in his narrative, mentions that he also heard screams and raps; and, more alarming, there occurred between his bed and the ceiling 'loud noises like continuous explosions of petards.' He tried room after room in the house, but the disturbances followed him. He sprinkled the rooms with holy water and recited the *Visita quæsumus*—a prayer for the divine protection of a house and its occupants—but all to no purpose. A Roman Catholic archbishop also attempted to exorcize the house—or, rather, the ghosts—but failed to stop the disturbances.

In August 1893 Father Hayden met by accident a young woman who, in 1881, had been governess in the Steuart family. Without his mentioning a word that he had ever even been to Ballechin, she volunteered the statement that she had left her employment because so many people complained of queer noises in the house. She became frightened and left. When questioned, it transpired that the noises had occurred in the identical bed-rooms occupied by Father Hayden.

In August 1896 Ballechin House was let to a wealthy Spanish family, who had many servants, including an English butler,

Mr Harold Sanders. They agreed to rent it for twelve months. They gave a house-party, and their guests went through some curious experiences. A 'Miss B.' wrote to *The Times*:

I wakened suddenly in the middle of the night and noticed how quiet the house was. Then I heard the clock strike two, and a few minutes later there came a crashing, vibrating battering against the door of the outer room. My sister was sleeping very soundly, but she started up in a moment at the noise, wide awake.

Two nights later Miss B. and her sister again heard the 'battering' noise, when they and their host's daughter remained in the latter's bedroom, hoping to hear the Poltergeist. There were also two military men among the guests, and they too had some startling experiences. Major B. records (August 24, 1896) that

at about 3.30 A.M. I heard very loud knocking, apparently on Colonel A.'s door, about nine raps in all—three raps quickly one after the other, then three more the same, and three more the same. It was as if some one was hitting the door with his fist as hard as he could hit. I left my room at once, but could find nothing to account for the noise. It was broad daylight at the time. I heard the same noises on August 28 and 30 at about the same hour.

Colonel A. confirmed the Major's account and remarked that 'I heard a terrific banging at my bedroom door, generally about from 2 to 3 A.M., two nights out of three.'

Another member of the house-party, a Mrs G., said:

I, my daughter, and my husband were put in rooms adjoining, at the end of the new wing. At 2 A.M. a succession of thundering knocks came from the end of our passage, re-echoing through the house, where it was heard by many others. About half an hour afterwards my husband heard a piercing shriek; then all was still. The next night, and succeeding ones, we heard loud single knocks at different doors along our passage. The last night but one before we left I was roused from sleep by hearing the clock strike one, and immediately it had ceased six violent blows shook our own door on its hinges, and came with frightful rapidity, followed by deep groans.

The best account of this 'haunted house-party' comes from the butler, already mentioned. In a letter to *The Times* (June 21, 1897), he speaks of many kinds of noises, such as rattling, knock-

ing, 'tremendous thumping on the doors,' heavy footsteps along the passages, and similar disturbances heard by every inmate of the house, including the servants. Mr Sanders continues:

The same thing happened with variations almost nightly for the succeeding two months that I was there, and every visitor that came to the house was disturbed in the same manner. One gentleman (a colonel) told me he was awakened on several occasions with the feeling that some one was pulling the bedclothes off him; sometimes heavy footsteps were heard, at others like the rustling of a lady's dress; and sometimes groans were heard, but nearly always accompanied with heavy knocking; sometimes the whole house would be aroused. One night I remember five gentlemen meeting at the top of the stairs in their night-suits, some with sticks or pokers—one had a revolver—vowing vengeance on the disturbers of their sleep. During the two months after I first heard the noises I kept watch altogether about twelve times in various parts of the house, mostly unknown to others (at the time), and have heard the noises in the wing as well as other parts.

When watching I always experienced a peculiar sensation a few minutes before hearing any noise. I can only describe it as like suddenly entering an ice-house, and a feeling that some one was present and about to speak to me. On three different nights I was awakened by my bedclothes being pulled off my feet. But the worst night I had at Ballechin was one night about the second week in September, and I shall never forget it as long as I live. I had been keeping watch with two gentlemen: one a visitor, the other one of the house. We heard the noises I have described about half-past two. Both gentlemen were very much alarmed, but we searched everywhere, but could not find any trace of the ghost or cause of the noises, although they came this time from an unoccupied room. (I may mention that the noises were never heard in the daytime, but always between twelve, midnight, and four in the morning—generally between two and four o'clock.) After a thorough search the two gentlemen went to bed sadder, but not wiser, men, for we had discovered nothing. I then went to my room, but not to bed, for I was not satisfied, and decided to continue the watch alone. So I seated myself on the service stairs. . . .

I had not long to wait (about twenty minutes) when the knocking recommenced from the same direction as before, but much louder than before, followed, after a very short interval, by two distinct groans, which certainly made me feel very uncomfortable, for it sounded like some one being stabbed and then falling to the floor.

That was enough for me. I went and asked the two gentlemen who had just gone to bed if they had heard anything. One said he had heard five knocks and two groans, the same as I had; while the other (whose room was much nearer to where the sounds came from) said he had heard nothing. I then retired to my bed, but not to sleep, for I had not been in bed three minutes before I experienced the sensation as before, but instead of being followed by knocking, my bedclothes were lifted up and let fall again—first at the foot of my bed, but gradually coming towards my head. I held the clothes around my neck with my hands, but they were gently lifted in spite of my efforts to hold them. I then reached around me with my hand, but could feel nothing. This was immediately followed by my being fanned as though some bird was flying around my head, and I could distinctly hear and feel something breathing on me. I then tried to reach some matches that were on a chair by my bedside, but my hand was held back as if by some invisible power. Then the thing seemed to retire to the foot of my bed. Then I suddenly found the foot of my bed lifted up and carried around towards the window for about three or four feet, then replaced to its former position. All this did not take, I should think, more than two or three minutes, although at the time it seemed hours to me. Just then the clock struck four and, being tired out with my long night's watching, I fell asleep.

I remarked that the Spanish family rented Ballechin for twelve months. They stayed exactly eleven weeks. They forfeited nine months' rent rather than spend a winter in the house.

Lord Bute was so impressed with the evidence (which I have now placed before the reader) that he decided to rent Ballechin House, and asked Colonel Lemesurier Taylor and Miss A. Goodrich-Freer (both experienced researchers) to make a thorough investigation. With a staff of servants, they began their inquiry on February 3, 1897. Lord Bute and Miss Goodrich-Freer published their report in 1899 under the title of *The Alleged Haunting of B—— House*, and it is from this book that we learn what happened during their search for the truth.

On the morning after their arrival Miss Freer was 'startled by a loud clanging sound, which seemed to resound through the house.' It was as if a long metal bar was being struck with a wooden mallet. The clanging was repeated at frequent intervals

during two hours. Then 'voices,' footsteps, and the sounds of things being dragged about were heard. Another phenomenon, which persisted throughout the investigation, was an aural impression as of some one reading aloud. No words could be distinguished, but the tone and the cadence always reminded them of a priest 'saying his office.'

Miss Freer and her friends saw the phantasm of a nun gliding up a glen, when the snow lay thick on the ground. The figure stopped, looked at Miss Freer, and then slowly mounted a slope apparently too steep for a human to climb. Then she disappeared. This nun was seen on many occasions, and once Miss Freer saw her in tears. She says: 'Her weeping seemed to me passionate and unrestrained,' and added that 'she speaks upon a rather high note with a quality of youth in her voice.' By means of a Ouija board, they ascertained that the nun's name was 'Ishbel,' but not much reliance can be placed on this method of obtaining 'information.'

From the diary that Miss Freer kept, and in which she recorded every incident, it is clear that the major phenomena at Ballechin House were of typical Poltergeist origin. We read of many footsteps, voices, dragging of heavy objects, pattering sounds, explosive bangs, reading in monotone, knockings, crashes, 'movements of animals,' groans, falls of heavy objects, rappings, metallic sounds, thumps on doors, footsteps in locked and empty rooms, shuffling sounds, and so on.

A number of distinguished persons visited Ballechin during the investigation, and among them were F. W. H. Myers and Sir (then Mr) Oliver Lodge. Sir Oliver said that he had heard knocks on the wall, a sawing noise, and a droning and a wailing sound. He also heard raps, some of which, he remarked, 'seemed intelligent.'

Miss Freer and her party remained at Ballechin House for about three months, and the result of their investigation was that they were convinced that the phenomena were paranormal. I agree.

The inquiry was carefully planned and carried out, and though scientific psychical research was then only in its infancy,

the investigators did the best they could in the circumstances. A few weeks after Lord Bute relinquished his tenancy *The Times* controversy started. I need not add anything to what I have already said about this correspondence, except that nothing emerged which caused Lord Bute and his friends to modify their opinion that Ballechin House was, in fact, haunted. I say 'was' because, as in so many Poltergeist cases, the phenomena abruptly ceased. I have heard of no further disturbances there.

I will now place in parallel columns the truly remarkable correspondences between the haunted Rectory and the haunted manor house:

BORLEY

A large, rambling building in a remote district.

A modern house built on the site of more ancient ones: a previous house at least as old as 1625.

Legends of suicide, murder, and sudden death connected with Borley—and much scandal. Probably no truth in them.

Contained a 'Blue Room,' focus of many strange manifestations. House was abnormally cold, remarked upon by every observer. Cambridge Commission recorded the fact that the 'cold spot' was 11° Fahr. cooler than surrounding atmosphere.

Strong Roman Catholic associations right through the story.

It was a priest (the Rev. G. Eric Smith) who reported the case to a psychical researcher (Harry Price).

Price rented the house for twelve months and formed a panel of sceptical and independent observers to investigate the case. Phenomena were confirmed.

BALLECHIN

Ballechin was large and isolated.

A modern house built on the site of one dating back at least to the sixteenth century.

Similar traditions concerning Ballechin, probably groundless. Scandal-mongers also busy.

Contained a 'Blue Room,' focus of many strange manifestations. House was abnormally cold. Miss Freer states: 'The room was so cold that we had to cover our faces. . . . The house felt like a vault.' The butler called it an 'ice-house.'

The owners were Roman Catholics, and the R.C. faith permeates the whole case.

It was a priest (Father Hayden, S.J.) who reported the case to a psychical researcher (Lord Bute).

Lord Bute rented the house for three months and formed a panel of sceptical and independent observers to investigate the case. Phenomena were confirmed.

## BORLEY

A nun was the central figure at Borley.

The appearance of the nuns was identical at Borley and Ballechin. The nun 'was sad, ill, pale, and appeared to have been weeping.'

Nun haunted the grounds only and *never* the house. Seen many times.

By means of Planchette, nun communicated and said her name was 'Marie.'

Poltergeist phenomena included bangings at bedroom doors, rustling of a silk dress, crashes, dragging of heavy objects, pattering sounds, raps, footsteps in locked and empty rooms, voices, whisperings, etc.

'Bed phenomena' were a feature at Borley. Sleepers disturbed in their beds, and one Rector's wife was thrown out of bed three times. A bed was turned over when the house was empty and unoccupied.

Several figures seen at Borley, including that of a *headless* man ('Old Amos').

The apparition of a priest was seen at Borley.

A former owner, the Rev. Harry Bull, a believer in survival, said he would 'return,' if he could, and 'manifest.' His ghost was seen.

Exorcisms by both Anglican and Roman Catholic priests failed to stop the phenomena.

Dogs reacted at Borley, and Captain Gregson lost two quite

## BALLECHIN

A nun was the central figure at Ballechin.

The appearance of the nuns was identical at Ballechin and Borley. The nun 'was pale, and her weeping seemed to be passionate and unrestrained.'

Nun haunted the grounds only and *never* the house. Often seen.

By means of the Ouija board, nun communicated and said her name was 'Ishbel.'

Poltergeist phenomena included bangings at bedroom doors, rustling of a silk dress, crashes, dragging of heavy objects, pattering sounds, raps, footsteps in locked and empty rooms, voices, whisperings, etc.

'Bed phenomena' were a feature at Ballechin. Sleepers disturbed in their beds. The butler's bed-clothes 'were lifted up and let fall again. . . . Then I suddenly found the foot of my bed lifted up and carried towards the window.' Several figures seen at Ballechin, including that of a *legless* man.

The apparition of a priest was seen at Ballechin.

A former owner, a Major Steuart, a believer in survival, said he would 'return,' if he could, and 'manifest.' His ghost was seen.

Exorcisms by both Anglican and Roman Catholic priests failed to stop the phenomena.

A dog, 'Scamp,' reacted at Ballechin. Terrified at 'invisible

## BORLEY

valuable spaniels, which bolted through fright. Or they may have been invisibly hit!

Maids refused to stop at Borley. Occupants of Borley Rectory vacated the house on account of conditions. Several clergy refused to live in it.

A number of distinguished people visited Borley and were impressed.

Price wrote two monographs on Borley which caused national interest.

## BALLECHIN

shuffling footsteps and strange voices.'

Maids refused to stop at Ballechin. A Spanish family vacated Ballechin after three months, though they paid a year's rent.

A number of distinguished scientists and others visited Ballechin and were impressed.

Lord Bute and Miss Freer wrote a monograph on Ballechin which caused national interest.

Though there are so many correspondences (and I have not named them all) between Borley and Ballechin hauntings, the cases are not comparable from the evidential standpoint. Some two hundred people have testified to paranormal happenings at the Rectory, but only a relatively small number of observers witnessed the Scottish phenomena. Borley was investigated for sixteen years—Ballechin for three months. And whereas the Ballechin manifestations persisted—or actively persisted—for only a few years, and then stopped suddenly, our evidence proves that Borley has been infested for nearly a century, and the phenomena may not even now have entirely ceased. But they are becoming weaker and much less frequent. The Ballechin mystery was never solved.

## 'MIRACLES' AND THEIR MECHANICS

**A**SSUMING that the phenomena—or even a tenth of them recorded in this volume and in my previous monograph on Borley are genuine, how are we to account for them? How and why do they happen? Can their causation be explained?

I will say at once that *we know absolutely nothing* about the mechanism that causes a ghost to appear or disappear; or why a Poltergeist heaves half a brick at an observer; or what a Poltergeist is, or where it gets its energy from to throw the brick.<sup>1</sup> We do not know what happens to us when we die, or where we go to, or how we get there. And if we can 'come back'—in the spiritualistic sense—we do not know how that occurs, either! I reiterate that we know nothing about these things, which must have puzzled mankind since the beginning of Time.

Of course, there are theories, and the most brilliant intellects have, for hundreds of years, been trying to solve the problems. They have not succeeded. Some of these theories are as brilliant as the brains that evolved them—but they remain theories. This is not the place to discuss them, and I must refer the reader to the philosophers and spiritualists, or their works, for the many conjectures and speculations concerning immortality, the after-life, and the eternal question, 'Where do we go from here?' There are hundreds of books on the subject—and most of them contradict one another! In other words, the authors are merely guessing. I wish I had a good theory to present to the reader—a theory that would cover all the known facts of the Borley case, but I have not. Anyway, it's not my job. But I am quite certain that, some day, Science *will* discover the Great Secret, and during recent years considerable progress has been made in interesting orthodoxy, if not in the elucidation of the problems that confront it. I shall refer to this progress in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> These questions are more fully discussed in my *Poltergeist over England*.

If we have learned little from the living as regards the next world, we have learned less from those alleged discarnate 'entities' who say they have returned from the 'Summer Land.' They tell us all about their life there, how they arrived, how they came back, and how happy they are—though some appear to be supremely unhappy. If these séance-room entities were consistent in what they tell us we might believe them. But they are not. Each tells a different story.

Yet 'survival' is, to me, an attractive concept—I mean in the spiritualist sense. I am *sure* we survive. I am not at all sure that we can 'return' at séances, twang the banjo, and shove the furniture about. And yet, at séances, the banjo *is* twanged paranormally, and the furniture becomes volatile. May there not be an unknown force, either physical or spiritual, that can do these things? I think there is. Another problem for Science!

I think it was Goethe who wanted 'Light, more light.' I too want more light, *and* more evidence, before I can accept the 'survival' theory of the spiritualists. Does Borley supply this evidence? Perhaps, and the spiritualists may be right after all! In *The Most Haunted House in England*<sup>1</sup> I state that 'The spirit hypothesis—that is, the continuity of personality and the power to communicate after death—covers most of the facts. The "forms," the "nun," the "shadows," and other figures seen at Borley by so many people at different times perhaps once belonged to living incarnate beings.' If, six years ago, I came to the conclusion that I could find no better explanation of some of the Rectory phenomena than the popular 'survival' theory, I unhesitatingly declare that I am still of that same opinion. A further six years' study of the phenomena, and of all the new evidence that has accrued during this period, still more strengthens my belief that a more reasonable solution is not yet available. I would even go so far as to state that the Borley case presents a better argument for 'survival' than that of any similar case with which I am familiar. But I, personally, still feel that I want something *more*. I want *scientific* proof that the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 183.

ephemeral and intangible figures which flit hither and thither across the ill-lit stage of the Borley drama were once living men and women. Whether such scientific proof is possible is another matter; but Science must try to solve the riddle.

I began this chapter by stating that I did not intend to discuss the many theories of 'ghosts' postulated by philosophers and others. But, what is much more to the point, I *will* present to the reader some views and suggestions put forward by students and those who have studied the Borley hauntings from a dispassionate angle. Their speculations are novel, interesting, ingenious, and—in some cases—even exciting. Into the last-named category can be placed a very modern 'view of ghosts' that was sent to me by Mr Percy Pigott, of Eagle House, Kirk Ella, Hull, on February 12, 1941. Here it is:

#### A NEW VIEW OF GHOSTS

DEAR MR PRICE,

I have just been reading your most interesting book, *The Most Haunted House in England*. I have no doubt it brings you a great deal of correspondence. The reason I write is because in your chapter, 'Can the Phenomena be Explained?' you say that if you were asked to explain 'the coach, the noise of galloping hoofs, the appearance of the bay horses, the glittering harness, the light in the window, etc.' you can only say 'I do not know,' and you add, 'no one knows.'

Yet this appears to me as the least mysterious and the most easily explained of all the extraordinary phenomena you not only describe, but produce an abundance of evidence to support. Let me explain.

Is it not possible that the substance which pervades all space, interpenetrating and enveloping our earth and our bodies, which scientists simply name ether, but do not pretend to explain, is capable of receiving and retaining pictures of our actions and the sounds which emanate from such actions, and even of reproducing them when conditions are favourable, as, for instance, the evening light, the temperature, and the weather generally?

In other words, this little understood substance is perhaps capable of acting as a photographic negative. This is simply what a cinema film does. It reproduces form, motion, and sound. Why should not Nature also do it? May we not have a mirage of a past event as well as of a distant scene? The fact that we always associate

motion with consciousness has subjected us to an error of interpretation.

If this is so it seems feasible that those events which have been accompanied by intense feeling and concentrated thought, such as accompany the great tragedies of life, should be more deeply impressed and therefore more clearly reproduced than those which are performed unheedingly and habitually.

Thus I have heard of a street in London where the sound of running footsteps is sometimes heard. I am told also that the hearer gets the impression that these footsteps are being panic-driven. Over this pavement a murderer once fled from the crime he had committed. Which is the more reasonable: to suppose that the murderer is constantly running again and again over this pavement, and that though his body is invisible his footsteps are audible, or to suppose that the original sound is simply being reproduced?

Again, I have heard that Ann Bullen still haunts Hampton Court and that the sound of her footsteps and the wail of her anguish as she fled from her husband, having failed to obtain the mercy she had been pleading for, are heard at certain times. Her form may have been seen, I do not know. Is it not incredible to suppose that Ann Bullen has been thus employed, at intervals at least, for four hundred years? It is not in the least incredible, in these days of gramophones and radio, to believe that the sound of her distressed wail can be, and is at times, reproduced.

Thus the coach, the galloping hoofs, the bay horses, the glittering harness, are all real in that they are an objective actuality; but the observer is mistaken if he thinks he is viewing real horses or a driver consciously directing them. The name, a 'spectre,' a 'phantom,' literally applies. This theory would also account for the nun. (I think there is generally reason to be sceptical of ghosts being conscious egos after the lapse of a number of years after passing over.) It would also account for the light in the window. It could account for all the noise of footsteps, shufflings, scrabblings, tappings, thuds, etc. Is it not significant that no one ever spoke to the nun? Had they approached her for this purpose she would probably have vanished, the necessary distance, or angle, for seeing this mirage having been altered.<sup>1</sup> It would then have been regarded as uncanny. Is it not significant also that no ghost of any sort was seen to account for the footsteps, thuds, etc., which were heard? Is it reasonable to suppose that spirits, or ghosts, who pass silently through solid walls, should make such a noise with their feet? I submit, it is more

<sup>1</sup> This is exactly what happened when the four Misses Bull saw the nun, in sunlight, on July 28, 1900. Miss Elsie approached the phantasm—which instantly vanished (see pp. 28 and 30).—H.P.

reasonable to regard these noises as being echoes of an ancient tragedy.

This, however, will not account for the messages on the wall, stone-throwing, furniture-moving, bottle-dropping, hair-ruffling, bell-ringing, belt-raising, etc. For these phenomena I accept your theory of Poltergeists, and of course it is possible that the Poltergeists accounted for all the noises in the house. But to give a mystery a name does not always explain it. What is a Poltergeist? You refer to 'these playful little fellows.' For my part, I cannot regard a Poltergeist as in any sense a being. In my judgment, we should be more correct to regard it as a vaguely conscious, instinctual, elemental force. Such elemental force may emanate from, and in the Borley case certainly has emanated from, the distress and restlessness of some departed human being. It is fully charged with power, but power only for one sole purpose—namely, of expressing this restlessness and distress on the physical plane in the hope of receiving help from the place where its trouble originated. The vagueness of its consciousness is shown by the feeble effort either to write or compose a simple sentence or understand one. If you ask me how could a blind force throw stones or ring bells I can only reply that neither you nor I can claim to know all the laws of nature, and that these phenomena are evidence of such a law. Because there are no visible hands it is not, therefore, necessary to postulate invisible ones. The Egyptians were supposed to be able consciously to charge objects with such a force, and there is some evidence to support this.

The headless driver is more difficult to account for. I notice there are only two witnesses of this. I will not question the honesty of their testimony, but suggestion might account for it. They see what they believe to be a ghostly coach, ghosts are associated with tragedies and beheadings, immediately they see the driver headless. This is quite easy when viewing a mirage, which I am suggesting this was.

Another method for accounting for this very gruesome apparition is along the following lines:

There is little doubt that at some time there was a cruel tragedy at Borley in which a group of people were involved. Both the apparitions and the Poltergeist manifestations would have their origin in this tragedy, in which the coachman would be concerned and may have lost his head. Then he might very likely think of himself as headless after passing over. It is well known that all apparitions of the living are caused by the subject thinking of himself as with a distant friend or in a distant place, and thus he projects his form to that place and it is occasionally seen and even heard.

Now I have heard, and I can well believe, that it is much easier for the so-called dead thus to project their appearances than the living. I am confident that many apparitions of those recently departed occupying their accustomed chair or walking down a certain path with their own particular gait are due to their thinking of themselves thus occupied after passing over. Perhaps the coachman thus pictured himself as headless.

Finally there is, in my judgment, the most remarkable of all phenomena—matter passing through matter. This is not unknown at spiritualist séances. It puzzles chemists. 'If it is true,' I once heard a chemist say, 'it overthrows all our ideas about matter.' But do chemists, or anyone else, know what constitutes the solidity of matter? Another chemist, who was also an occult student, when I asked him what made a wall solid and impassable, replied, 'Thought.' I believe he was right. We think of things as solid, and solid they are to us. But our Poltergeist friends may not have been subject to those illusions of sense to which we humans are.

This is a long letter. I hope I have not wearied you. I will close by using your own words and applying them to myself. 'I do not know.' These are just my speculations.

Mr Pigott mentions Poltergeists, 'entities' 'accepted' by many persons who scoff at most of the phenomena associated with psychical research. From whence do Poltergeists obtain the energy with which to displace objects, smash windows, and perform similar violent actions? The physicist, Mr A. J. B. Robertson, M.A., who formed the Cambridge Commission of inquiry into the Borley phenomena (see pp. 146-178), sent me a lengthy essay, *The Poltergeist Problem: A Physical View*,<sup>1</sup> from which I take the following extracts:

Both the thermal and mechanical phenomena show considerable evidence of being produced by some kind of intelligence. In this and in other respects an appreciable degree of correlation is noticeable with the phenomena produced by physical mediums. According to one school of thought, physical mediums merely act as the agents for definite entities or spirits entirely separate, in their normal existence, from the mind of the medium, and the view is often expressed that Poltergeists are mischievous spirits, possibly rather undeveloped, which remain confined to a particular house or

<sup>1</sup> Published in full in *Poltergeist over England*, pp. 378-381.

locality and are able to utilize certain people, especially adolescent children, as physical mediums. On the other hand, the activities of physical mediums can be interpreted without the help of the spirit hypothesis, since in many cases the apparent entities are equally explicable as being secondary personalities of the medium. In a rather similar way one might regard a haunted house (in the Poltergeist sense) either as the abode of a separate entity or spirit of some kind, or as a place where for some unknown reason certain people are able to exert some of the powers possessed by physical mediums. The connexion between the occurrence of Poltergeist phenomena and the presence of certain people at the same time, and the possibility of Poltergeist phenomena taking place in the absence of any persons, are matters requiring further investigation. At the present time the evidence seems to rather favour the view that a Poltergeist is at least a partially independent entity.

In order to produce objective phenomena, such as the throwing of kitchen crockery, a Poltergeist has to exert force of some kind, and it would in fact appear that Poltergeists have access to some form of energy. The basic assumptions made here are that Poltergeist phenomena are real and not fundamentally dissimilar to ordinary physical processes involving energy changes, so that the thermodynamics of Poltergeists is a definite problem to be considered—at least, for a start—in the normal scientific way. One might tentatively suggest three sources of energy as being available to a Poltergeist. First there is the adolescent child. In numerous cases it has been noticed that phenomena are produced most vigorously when the child is lying or sleeping in bed. The conditions may then be rather favourable for the removal of energy from the child by the Poltergeist; the child under these conditions approaches more closely the state of a medium when in trance. A second possible source of energy is from the cooling of air and perhaps other bodies. One cubic foot of air (at N.T.P.<sup>1</sup>) when cooled through one degree of Fahrenheit loses about fifteen foot-pounds of energy (this is the amount of work expended in lifting a fifteen-pound object through a vertical distance of one foot). The cooling of a small quantity of air therefore releases a considerable quantity of energy. Such a process, although in agreement with the first law of thermodynamics, would be a violation of the second law under some conditions. It follows from the second law that a volume of air surrounded by a quantity of air at the same uniform temperature can only be cooled with respect to its immediate surroundings by means of some agency which does work and

<sup>1</sup> Normal temperature and pressure—i.e., 0° Centigrade and 760 mm. of mercury.—H.P.

thereby transfers the heat to some other place. In actual fact the experimental evidence on temperature variations in haunted houses is scanty, but both rises and falls in temperature have been noted. It is not at all clear whether the Poltergeist can escape the restrictions of the second law, or alternatively can act in a manner similar to that of a refrigerating machine.

A third possible energy source is suggested by an examination of Poltergeist displacements themselves. In many cases it happens that the object displaced finishes on a lower horizontal level than it started from, its resultant movement being in a downward direction. An examination of some of the literature on Poltergeists suggests that movements of objects downward are considerably more frequent than movements upward. In general, therefore, a Poltergeist displacement is accompanied by a decrease in potential energy. At the same time it is noticed that the objects fall much more slowly than they would do under the influence of gravity alone. Now an object when falling in the normal way loses potential energy which is converted into kinetic energy, and at any point on the path of the falling object the potential energy lost is equal to the kinetic energy gained (neglecting small order corrections). But with Poltergeist manifestations this is clearly not the case: the potential energy lost is only partially transformed into kinetic energy, and hence part of the potential energy is lost in some unknown way—perhaps to the Poltergeist. This consideration raises the general question of whether the Poltergeist can store energy. If so, and if the store of energy is situated in a localized region of space, it might perhaps be detectable with suitable instruments. One might inquire whether the 'cold spot' at Borley Rectory has some special significance in this connexion, being a localized region apparently having rather curious properties at times.

When Mr Robertson expressed his opinion concerning how the Poltergeist might obtain energy the public knew little of the working of Radar and nothing at all about the atomic bomb. Is it not possible that the entities under discussion may know more than we do about splitting the uranium nucleus, and the disintegration of atoms? They may know how to use electrons, protons, neutrons, and positrons to their advantage in the displacement of objects, and, especially, in the production of the terrific bangs (mild atomic explosions?) so often heard in Poltergeist infestations. They may employ the atomic energy in

the sun, or cosmic energy, in order to serve their purpose. Poltergeists may be able to 'tap' Nature's safe-deposit and obtain all the energy they require for their violent manifestations. Not many atoms would have to be split to enable the entities to hurl a few wine bottles or to jerk the baby on to the fire. So perhaps the secret of Poltergeist energy will be discovered not by the psychical researcher, but by the nuclear physicist!

Canon Phythian-Adams also tells us what he thinks Poltergeists are. He says:<sup>1</sup>

The truth is, I suppose, that we shall have to make up our minds, one way or the other, as to what the 'entity' is with which or with whom we are dealing. The frequent failure of exorcism seems to be another argument in favour of the human explanation. It failed, for example, at Borley because what was wanted was not the exorcism of an evil spirit but the quieting of a miserable mind. It may have failed elsewhere for the same reason. There are cases too where the infesting 'entity' is indifferent to any outward and formal deterrents (blessed medallions, etc.), but yields at once to the mere presence of a man of real religion. 'This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting.' My own impression, after studying the evidence, is that all Poltergeist phenomena are of human origin, and that they are connected with the life (and death) history of the particular personality. The *arcana* of abnormal psychology have still to be fathomed, but we already know something of the powers which dislocation can unleash. I should be quite prepared to learn that at the deepest level immense subhuman (and morally neutral) energies can be tapped or freed. We are none of us perhaps very far from these primeval pulsings of life which some call the devil, and others the great god Pan. *Dominus sit adjutorium nostri!*

A Roman Catholic view of the hauntings was sent to me (April 25, 1941) by Mr Sidney A. Paris, a civil engineer, of 62 Cornwall Road, Bishopston, Bristol. He says:

Much of the story has no doubt interested me because of its Catholic atmosphere, and, if I may, I would like to speculate on the possible causes of the manifestations.

The following are the main ghostly actors:

1. The nun.
2. The monk.

<sup>1</sup> 'Plague of Darkness,' in the *Church Quarterly Review* (London, January–March 1946), pp. 204–218.

3. The coach and headless man.
4. The Rev. Harry Bull.
5. Poltergeists, etc.

The first thing that strikes me is a kind of 'chain development.' There seems to be some cause selecting persons out of different historic periods and making them 'earth-bound' at this spot. For example, the nun, the coachman, and the Rev. Harry Bull are of different periods.

Now, in these phenomena one is obviously dealing with something on the borderland of the physical universe, if not with a spirit world, and for this reason the method of physical science is immensely useful in collating the physical factors involved. However, I suggest that when attempting to reduce to order the 'spirit' or non-material aspects, a different tool is wanted since physical science is by its nature incapable of penetrating there. I suggest, therefore, the method of philosophy and the science of theology.

Basing ourselves, therefore, on the *Philosophia Perrinis*, which was good enough for Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas, etc., it can be shown from purely natural reasoning that the human being has a spiritual soul which (apart from a direct act of annihilation by God Himself) is indestructible. . . .

Natural reason, then, proves the possibility of the existence of discarnate souls.

For the existence of spirits, both good and evil, and for the existence of Hell, Heaven, and Purgatory, we must turn to the Revelation of God. This is taught by the Church.

I incline to the view that, in the case of the nun at least, you are dealing with a personality (*i.e.*, a being having intelligence and will). The 'nun' may be either a human soul or a good or evil spirit (non-human). The shape that we see cannot be the soul on the above reasoning, but must needs be tenuous matter borrowed perhaps from the observers, and especially 'families,' who inhabit the house. In your *Fifty Years of Psychical Research*<sup>1</sup> you have tried, for example, to photograph with infra-red light the ectoplasmic arms issuing from mediums.

What started this trail of psychic activity I cannot pretend to say. But I would hazard the general story as follows:

The nun may have been murdered or died suddenly and her sins may have required, under the mysterious workings of justice, that she remain 'earthbound' under certain conditions. I do not know enough about Purgatory to say whether it is a place or a state or both. As 'Time' is involved I see no serious objection to place, but

<sup>1</sup> London (1939), pp. 104-106.—H. P.

a Catholic priest should be consulted if more accurate information is required. It seems possible that only a Mass said on the spot might be the condition of her release, and for this reason it might be an act of charity to arrange for a Mass to be said as she indeed seems to have pleaded.

As regards the nuisance value of Poltergeists, it may be that these are not human entities, but it is also possible that certain persons connected with the old priory (not necessarily monks) may have remained earthbound in a similar way to the nun. Henry VIII probably despoiled the priory and a number of peasants probably lost their livelihood as a consequence, as well as the monks. Some of these may have retained feelings of revenge which they expressed on the successors of the usurpers who built a rectory on their old foundations. As an indication of this I would suggest that since Holy Week and the relic of the Curé d'Ars were respected, this seems to argue the presence of intelligences who are imbued with Catholicism. Mrs Foyster may have received the worst blows perhaps because she was more psychic. The nun, who presumably is not of the same period (1667) as the monastery (Bures<sup>1</sup>), could appeal to Mrs Foyster, perceiving perhaps her powers and sympathy. I would rather doubt, however, the existence of convents in 1667 or even twenty or so years previously. Planchette here comes under suspicion; however, it is not intrinsically impossible.

As the reader knows, Masses have been said for the nun, and the phenomena appear to have ceased—or are ceasing. I agree that Poltergeists are not human entities.<sup>2</sup> They may be spirits of a different order, a view taken by Father Aidan Elrington, O.P., in the *Catholic Herald* (November 22, 1940). He says: 'But what might the explanation be? Some theories are discussed, but no one theory can be advanced that covers all the facts. There is the nun, the coach and horses on the one hand, and on the other the so-called Poltergeist phenomena; the latter may indeed be the work of spirits, but the other phenomena remain unexplained.'

Mr M. Heuds, of Purley Downs Road, Sanderstead, Surrey, raises (February 7, 1941) the old question of how and why we see ghosts *clothed* as in life. He has a theory:

<sup>1</sup> As I have pointed out, it is doubtful whether a monastery (or convent) was ever established at Borley or Bures.—H.P.

<sup>2</sup> What they are is discussed in *Poltergeist over England*.

If certain people see the dead 'fully clothed' it might be due to the fact that the dead *themselves* project on our brain the thought—or the way—in which they want us to see them, as they knew themselves to be whilst on earth—that is, fully clothed. And these thoughts projected on our brain have such a force that they exteriorize themselves, and we get a 'thought-form' only, as it were, so much so, that if we try to move towards the ghost it suddenly vanishes (which a solid thing could not do). And why? Because the fact of our moving towards it disturbs the very elements making the apparition in that way possible.

More than one correspondent has commented upon the fact that so many clergy were involved in the Borley hauntings. This is true. It is also true that clergymen, as percipients, have been concerned in countless cases of haunting and Poltergeist infestations. And the number of rectories where Poltergeists have manifested themselves is legion.<sup>1</sup> Apropos of Borley, Mr H. E. Adshead, whom I have previously mentioned in this volume, remarked in his letter: 'You do not seem to notice that it is clergymen who cause the big events! Even after the fire it was two clergymen again.' I assure Mr Adshead that I *did* notice the clergy connexion, even if I did not mention it. The Borley story is almost completely centred on the clergy, their families, priests, monks, nuns, and the Church generally—especially the Roman Catholic Church. Mr Adshead's reference to 'two clergymen again' after the fire is interesting. When the Rectory was unoccupied and unfurnished Miss Ethel Bull's clerical friend was passing the building and 'heard an awful noise coming from the house as though a lot of furniture was being thrown about. He was a bit scared and took himself off.'<sup>2</sup> And on one of the rare occasions when the Rev. A. C. Henning (who has never resided at the Rectory) was using one of the large rooms there for a parish meeting 'a picture suddenly dropped from its nail on the wall and was smashed.'<sup>3</sup>

What is this nexus between priests and Poltergeists? Mr Howard Spring has a theory. He says (*Country Life*, December 18, 1942):

<sup>1</sup> I have devoted an entire chapter to 'Poltergeist-infested Rectories' in *Poltergeist over England*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

It is strange to me how often Poltergeists appear in an ecclesiastical context. The Wesley family knew all about it at Epworth Rectory: there was Borley; Mr Price writes<sup>1</sup> of a Shropshire manor house in which there were manifestations when a retired canon took up residence; and of a Lancashire farm where consecrated ground appears to have some bearing on the matter.<sup>2</sup> . . . Mr Price writes that the presence of a young girl in the house appears often to be the exciting cause of these phenomena; and I have wondered whether in these ecclesiastical precincts the poor 'flesh' has been tortured overmuch, leaving frustration to inhabit dark places.

I mentioned Captain V. M. Deane in Chapter III. He has studied the Borley case for many years, and has been in close contact with the principal witnesses. He too has a theory<sup>3</sup> which is to the effect that the 'percipients' (i.e., those who witnessed the phenomena) may, in fact, be the 'agents' (i.e., those through whom the phenomena were produced). These agents may have been—in the case of the Foysters—the professional mediums that were called in (the Marks Tey 'circle'), or the other many witnesses, including the Foysters themselves, may have been the unconscious source from which some unknown physical power drew its energy in order to produce the manifestations. In other words, those who *saw* the phenomena actually produced them—though quite ignorant of the fact. Captain Deane sums up:

A few definite conclusions may be drawn from the data at our disposal. They are:

(I) Showers of bottles and stones were produced by some incalculable spirit potential.

(II) This spirit was not altruistic, as it made itself a real nuisance. Nor was it malignant, as the amount of power exerted was sufficient to kill all the witnesses, if so desired. Nor was it very intelligent, as a modicum of human intelligence would have enabled it to communicate a coherent recital of its desires, history, or advice.

(III) Its knowledge of the process of 'apportioning' matter exceeds human knowledge.

(IV) The fact that apparitions of a nun have so frequently been

<sup>1</sup> In my autobiography, *Search for Truth*.—H.P.

<sup>2</sup> The Timberbottom Farm case. (See p. 290.)—H.P.

<sup>3</sup> Elaborated in his article, 'Borley Rectory Problems,' in *Psychic Science* (April 1941), pp. 32-35.

seen establishes the fact that an original existed, even as a photograph implies an original.

(V) The phenomena at Borley are more or less consistent with the actions one would expect from a demented female.

(VI) The successful laying of the ghost [by the Marks Tey Circle], for a period of two years, was based on the supposition that the cause of the trouble was a demented female, and it is easier to believe that successful results were obtained from a right assumption than from a wrong assumption.

(VII) If the demented nun theory is correct, then the theory of a future life is correct, *but* a future life which is not necessarily all 'Peace, perfect peace.' And so my last words to those who reject a future life and future punishment are 'Beware! Beware! Beware!'

Dr C. E. M. Joad too studied the phenomena and the conditions under which they were produced. In the *London Star* (October 21, 1940) he sets forth his views, some of which I reproduce herewith. Dr Joad visited Borley on July 28, 1937, with interesting results. His article is entitled 'What I think about Ghosts':

But who or what are these things? Mr Price thinks on the whole that the spirit hypothesis is the most plausible, but the spirit hypothesis does not necessarily mean that we survive as immortal souls which on occasion assume visible form and produce movements of material things. It may mean merely that something survives.

The human being, most of us are agreed, is not all body. In addition, most of us would claim that as well as a body we have minds or souls, but the mind or soul may not be a simple thing like an element: it may be complex like a chemical compound resulting from a mixture of two elements, one the body, the other what, for want of a better name, is sometimes called the psychic factor. At death the compound is broken up and the mind, therefore, goes out of existence.

But what of the elements of the compound? We know what happens to the body; it disintegrates and ultimately disappears. But we do not know what happens to the psychic factor. It may persist, at any rate for a time, and retain its power of combining with a piece of matter to produce a temporary, though very elementary, intelligence.

It combines, for example, with the body of a medium in a trance to form the temporary mind which sends 'spirit' messages; it may even combine with pieces of matter other than human bodies to

produce the moving of small objects, the rapping on tables, the ringing of bells, and the other phenomena usually ascribed to Poltergeists.

Fantastic and far-fetched? No doubt, but is it any more so than the facts which it is designed to explain?

In my previous monograph I did venture upon a theory that might explain hauntings in general—or at least some of them. I said that perhaps some of the phenomena at Borley 'were caused by the persisting remnants of the egos or personalities, with some portion of intelligence still retained, of persons who once were associated with the Rectory, or with some building formerly on the same site. The Rectory, I think, is—or was up to the time of its destruction by fire—saturated with such emanations.' It was a guess, but as one guess is as good as another, I made no apology for putting it forward.

The Rev. R. W. Maitland, Vicar of Darsham, Suffolk, read my book and, in a thought-provoking article which he calls 'an explanatory theory,' elaborates my views. He says (*Light*, January 23, 1941):

How, then, can we account for the many appearances of the nun and the coach—and, indeed, of all the other phenomena which fill the book?

My theory is this; the house was built and immediately lived in—this is an important point—by a man who undoubtedly was a psychic. Very likely, his family, a large one, inherited his powers—some certainly did; and so, to use Mr Price's words, the house became saturated with their emanations; though this psychic power, as I understand it, contained no 'persisting remnants of egos' or any intelligence of itself. It remained for those living in the house to use that power as their minds or subconscious minds desired.

In other words, given the proper conditions, we can make our own ghosts. I have proved that for myself much nearer home than Borley. And so it was then with regard to the nun and phantom coach and galloping horses and ghostly sounds and all the rest of it.

If such things are associated with haunted houses, as they are, then the imaginative mind (conscious or subconscious) of the percipient can create them anywhere, provided, as I have said, there is sufficient psychic power to work upon.

All these strange phenomena are veridical in the sense of which

F. W. H. Myers uses the word—*i.e.*, there is an external origin of an internal vision. Something outside themselves causes the percipients to see such things.

At this point some people, no doubt, will say: 'But what about the flying bottles and the apported coat and the gold ring?' I see no reason why that same psychic power which had been accumulating in the house for so many years may not have produced all this when acted upon by a Sensitive such as Mrs Foyster certainly was—an unconscious one, no doubt, but a very potent one for all that. After all, those of us who have seen a demonstration of telekinesis have seen the same thing.

Up to now we have done without 'spirits'—that is to say, disembodied spirits. I use the word 'disembodied' advisedly, for I maintain that we are spirits here and now and that our psychic power is evidence of it. There is no reason to deny, however, that those on the Other Side have played a part in the strange happenings of Borley Rectory.

It is very significant that Mr Price took part in a séance on his first visit there, and that Mr Harry Bull purported to come through; and significant also that he had declared in his lifetime that he would be justified in making himself known after death by physical means, if he so wished.

One word more. On laying down the book one is conscious of a feeling that it adds unnecessarily to the terrors of death. One can imagine the comments which some people would make upon reading it—'weird, uncanny, gruesome,' and it is for this purpose that I have put forward the theory that many of the terrors which surround it are of man's own making, the mysterious working of his own mind under the stimulus of some external power.

The house was an ideal one for that purpose. It was brand new when Mr Henry Bull moved into it, filling it with his psychic power and that of a rapidly growing family, who remained in possession for between sixty and seventy years, and so produced 'The most haunted house in England.'

Mr W. Harrison disagrees with the Rev. R. W. Maitland. In an 'answer' (*Light*, April 24, 1941), from which I take some extracts, Mr Harrison sets forth his reasons:

The suggestion that the phantoms seen probably originate in the minds of living persons inhabiting haunted houses at, or near, the time of the occurrences is certainly not borne out by the facts ordinarily found to exist. The phantoms seen are almost invariably those of persons who formerly inhabited the places, and

are frequently of a period of time long prior to the date of their manifestation. They are often quite outside the knowledge of the living witnesses, and their identity is often reasonably established by reference to local historical facts not previously known to such witnesses. The stories or legends associated with the hauntings may sometimes originate in the earliest occasions of their appearance, or may be entirely independent of them.

In the case of the Borley hauntings there is no evidence to show whether any such stories were current locally, or known to the members of the Bull family prior to their first seeing the apparitions:<sup>1</sup> nor is there any shred of reason for supposing the Rev. Harry Bull was in the habit of inventing ideas of this kind, or that he had ever, by an act of will and imagination, succeeded in creating a phantom visible to himself or other persons. On the contrary, in narrating his experiences of the phantoms to others, he expressed his bewilderment at what he had seen.

Accounts of the hauntings indicate that at times the apparition of the nun displayed cognizance of the presence of the witnesses—see the statement of Miss Ethel Bull (*The Most Haunted House in England*, p. 45) that when she pursued the gliding figure of the nun it stopped and turned towards her with an expression of intense grief on its face, and then vanished.

There have been published many other theories, views, and speculations concerning the Borley hauntings, and for these I must refer the reader to the Bibliography.

I have barely mentioned the psychological 'explanations.' I have had many letters from psychiatrists, neurologists, psychologists, and chemists. They suggest that the phenomena can be explained in terms of 'unconscious mind' phenomena, 'sub-conscious mind' phenomena, and in atomic physics. In other words, that the clue to the paranormal can be found in the normal—or slightly abnormal. These materialists suggest that the Borley manifestations perhaps can be explained by the behaviour of the mind, especially the subconscious mind. But not one has sent me a real explanation. And not one of their theories covers the *objective* phenomena, of which there are many. Their conjectures are of academic interest only, and do not get

<sup>1</sup> This evidence was forthcoming when Mrs C. Fahie informed Mr Henning that an old man well remembered the 'nun' story when he was a boy (see pp. 94 and 95).—H.P.

us very far, and I cannot fit them into the Borley puzzle without jettisoning many known hard *facts*.

Then there is the theory that every one who experienced the Rectory phenomena crossed a sort of enchanted boundary, suddenly became 'clairvoyant,' and saw the actual—though subjective—scenes as they were enacted hundreds of years ago. In other words, that large blocks of personal experience were displaced from their proper position in Time for their benefit. This is reminiscent of the famous 'visions' seen by Miss C. Anne E. Moberly and Miss Eleanor F. Jourdain during their exciting trip to Versailles in 1901.<sup>1</sup> We cannot say. What we can say, *with certainty*, is that we know nothing of the mechanics—spiritual or physical—of these 'miracles.'

Speaking of the spiritual aspect of these phenomena, it is significant that in the *Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee on Spiritualism* seven out of the ten members of the Committee agreed that the spiritualists have made out a very strong case for the survival of personality after death, and 'communications' from the dead. The Committee began its investigations in 1937, and a printed *Report* was circulated privately a year or two later. It has never been issued to the public, though the names of the members of the Committee, and their principal conclusions, were recorded in the psychic Press at the time.

<sup>1</sup> See their *An Adventure* (London, 1911).

CHAPTER XXII  
ONLY ONE CONCLUSION

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,  
The place is Haunted!

THOMAS HOOD

I BEGAN the last chapter by stating that, 'Assuming that the phenomena are genuine . . .' *Are* they, in fact, genuine? Were the manifestations, attested by some two hundred witnesses during the past sixteen years, of true paranormal origin?

As it is all a question of evidence, we will take 'counsel's opinion.' In the *Law Times* for August 9, 1941, is a leading article by Sir Ernest Jelf, who was then Senior Master of the Supreme Court, and King's Remembrancer from 1937 to 1943. He studied my previous monograph and has kindly permitted me to reprint his conclusions, which he too calls 'A Question of Evidence':

One of the most remarkable books of marvels, put forward as being literally true, which was ever published, has recently appeared under the name of *The Most Haunted House in England*, by Harry Price.

Those of us who all our lives have spent a large part of our working hours in courts of law, seeking to ascertain what is and what is not worthy of belief, will be staggered by the appeal, which this book makes, that we shall believe things more contrary to the ordinary experience of mankind than we could ever have dreamed of before.

And at the end of the book the author fairly enough throws out a challenge: 'Readers of this monograph are now *in possession of the evidence* I have accumulated for the alleged haunting of Borley Rectory: and it is for them to decide—as the jury—whether in fact the place is haunted or not. It is all *a question of Evidence*.'

Shall we take up the challenge?

The legal profession will not accept the paragraph which I have

cited as *quite* accurately stating the position. We are in the position of counsel, who has his brief, with proofs of all the witnesses, and who is asked to advise whether the case is one which would probably convince a jury. We are *not* in the position of a jury which has heard the evidence. There is from the point of view of a legal trial no 'evidence' as yet. Each of the witnesses who has given a proof would—in a legal trial—have to be examined, and that without leading questions. Witnesses—especially those who speak of marvellous things—seldom quite 'come up to their proofs.' And the story which they do tell is in turn subject to cross-examination. By the end of the process the story told in the box will differ in many respects from the story told in the proofs. Therefore we are not as yet in the position of a jury which has heard the evidence.

But let us suppose that we are asked, as counsel might be asked, whether, upon the perusal of the proofs, there is a good chance of substantiating the case which these proofs are designed to support.

On this understanding we can only say that they do present a very strong case indeed—stronger than most of us could ever have believed possible before we had read the book. There are more than a hundred witnesses, most of whom are still alive and available, including many persons of position and of intellectual attainment. And many of them were called in as unprejudiced outsiders, on purpose to see whether they would by their own experience corroborate the witnesses who had gone before.

And what is it that they are to prove? This one 'most haunted house in England' can boast not only of 'ghosts' as usually understood, but of marvellous Poltergeists who moved objects about and produced 'exhibits' which were there for all to see—to say nothing of the wonders of table-turning and Planchette.

Let us begin with 'ghosts,' as usually understood. Long before this book even reasonable men were obliged to admit that ghosts have been positively asserted to have appeared in precisely similar shape to many witnesses. In the classic phrases attributed by Boswell to Johnson, 'All reason is against it. All experience is for it.' What, however, were these phenomena? Deceased persons apparently seen and heard. But deceased persons are seen and heard in dreams. It is, we submit, unnecessary to suppose that a body of flesh and blood has been resurrected and that their clothes have been preserved fresh through the ages. The phenomena would appear to be more analogous to those of dreams. Things are seen and heard in dreams. But no waves of æther corresponding to the vision strike the retina of the eye; no vibrations of air corresponding to the auricular impression reach the drum of the ear. Dreams,

besides ghosts, are sometimes 'veridical' and correspond with some actual facts. Dreams, besides ghosts, are often common to many people. If that were the only marvel of 'the most haunted house in England' it would be amazing enough; but it would be nothing new—nothing that does not resemble some story that has been told to us by an aunt or an aunt's friend, if not personally experienced. Mr F. W. H. Myers writes of such a case, 'Although the experience came to him in visual terms, I do not suppose that it was really optical—that it came through the eyes.'

But what proofs of the witnesses in this book show are Poltergeist manifestations, the spontaneous displacement of objects (telekinesis), the appearance and disappearance of objects within the house, the spontaneous combustion of various parts of the house, the changing of wine into ink, sudden thermal variations, and inexplicable scents and odours. We have said enough to indicate the nature of the stories told by more than a hundred witnesses. Full details are given in the book. These stories stand on a perfectly different level from the ordinary ghost story, inasmuch as the 'Poltergeist' is a hypothesis to account for a force which can produce actual physical and chemical changes in matter, as for instance when things are thrown about, when wine is changed into ink, and when writings inexplicably appear and remain upon a wall.

After making every allowance for what we have said about witnesses not coming up to their proofs and so forth, a very strong case has undoubtedly been put forward, and we are at a loss to understand what cross-examination could possibly shake it. Any cross-examination would probably be based on the lines suggested by Coué's *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*—but this is really to submit that the witnesses have imagined the whole thing. But a hundred imaginers! But imaginers of position and intellectual repute! Imaginers brought from outside to come fresh to the examination as independent persons!

And then there are the dogs. The reaction of the dogs certainly seemed to show that they too saw some of the strange sights and heard some of the strange sounds of Borley Rectory. Did they imagine them?

There is one peculiar feature which has run through the ghost stories of all time—the deep interest which the spectres always take in the burial or other disposal of their corpses. From the Ghost of Elpenor in Hades described by Homer and the sailor in Horace's famous ode, the same idea comes down to Borley Rectory through hundreds of intermediate similar stories. Any theory to account for the facts must reckon with it.

It will be very interesting if one of these days the truth of some such story as that of Borley Rectory becomes relevant to some issue in a legal trial—it is not impossible to imagine such an eventuality. What would the jury say? They would probably disagree.

A good deal has happened since Sir Ernest Jelf's article appeared in the *Law Times*, and I must emphasize that his verdict as to the paranormality of the phenomena was based on a perusal of my first book on Borley: he knew nothing whatsoever of the vast and important additional evidence, supplied by an additional hundred witnesses, which is published in the present volume. If, in his considered judgment, he gave as his opinion that the proofs 'do present a very strong case indeed,' what will be his reaction to the great weight of fresh evidence that I am now submitting to the reader?

We will take another counsel's opinion, that of one of the most distinguished jurists of our generation, Sir Albion Richardson, K.C., C.B.E.

Sir Albion, who is Recorder of Nottingham (and was M.P. for Peckham from 1910 to 1922), has been Chairman of many Government judicial committees, and his whole career has been devoted to determining what is and is not evidence. He studied the Borley records as published in my earlier monograph, and kindly sent me for publication the following appreciation of the case:

Borley Rectory stands by itself in the literature of psychical manifestation. Wisely discarding theories of causation (which in these matters are little better than conjecture), the author, Mr Harry Price, sets out to prove by the cumulative evidence of eye-witnesses—recorded in a form which would be admissible in evidence in any court of law—the happening of events at Borley Rectory which it is impossible to explain by the operation of natural law.

The large number of the public who are interested in these things are under a debt of gratitude to him, for without his untiring energy and skilled experience as an investigator, the story of Borley Rectory would have remained unrevealed, and a fascinating chapter in the history of psychical research would have been lost to the world.

The evidence which he has collected of the phenomena which appeared there is as conclusive as human testimony can ever be, and is admirably marshalled. I have not met anyone who has read *The Most Haunted House in England* (and it is mainly with legal friends of long experience in the weighing and sifting of evidence that I have discussed it) who has not been satisfied that the manifestations therein disclosed are proved by the evidence, to the point of moral certainty. Many of these friends were, like myself, previously sceptical.

In view of the legal opinions printed above, plus the evidence of two hundred witnesses, and what I have seen with my own eyes, there is only one conclusion at which I can arrive: the Borley phenomena (or most of them) occurred in the way they were said to occur; they were of paranormal origin; they have been scientifically proved; and, as Sir Albion Richardson emphasizes, the evidence for their paranormality 'is as conclusive as human testimony can ever be.' Fraud, malobservation, exaggeration, natural causes, and trickery—conscious, unconscious, or subconscious—could not have accounted for the phenomena.

But if we have, from the legal angle, proved that the Borley phenomena are, in fact, genuine there are other major questions that cannot be decided with the same certainty. For example, although we have *unimpeachable* first-hand evidence that an apparition of a nun has been seen at Borley by many people, for almost a century, we have no real evidence at all that it was she—or it—who was responsible for the many varieties of phenomena that have been seen, heard, or experienced at the Rectory. And there must have been many entities at work there. Again, if we have little evidence that the nun was responsible for any of the manifestations, we have no *scientific* evidence that the name of the nun was 'Marie Lairre' or that her remains were found under the cellar floor. We *have* scientific evidence that part of these remains belonged to a young woman, and circumstantial evidence (the Planchette messages, wall-writings, pendants, 'pointers,' etc.) that the bones belonged to a young French nun named 'Marie Lairre' or 'Larre.'

## THE FOUR NUNS

But what complicates matters is the fact that we have *four* 'entities' claiming to be the nun-ghost! We have discussed 'Marie Lairre' very fully in these pages. We have discussed less fully the second principal claimant, Arabella Waldegrave, because I, personally, am not in possession of sufficient evidence to warrant treating that claim very seriously; and Canon Phythian-Adams has demolished such arguments as have been put forward on her behalf. The suggestion is that Arabella, granddaughter of James II (see Chapter XII), was a spy who was enticed from France and murdered at Borley—perhaps by a relative. Dr Phythian-Adams's theory (Chapter X), a much more acceptable one, is that a young French nun, Marie Lairre, was inveigled from France and murdered at Borley by a false lover or husband. There is some evidence for this, circumstantial though it be. It is not my rôle to make an *ex cathedrā* pronouncement on the question—my job has been to prove or disprove the phenomena, and in this I think I have succeeded. My interest in the identity of the nun is little more than academic. But I prefer the 'false lover' theory to the 'royal spy' hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> And the evidence undoubtedly supports the former postulate.

As I have said, there are two other claimants to the honour of haunting Borley, and I will now introduce them to the reader. Both claims are nearly as unsubstantial as the 'entities' making them, but they must be recorded.

Captain V. M. Deane, previously mentioned in this monograph, was a member of the Marks Tey<sup>1</sup> Circle of spiritualists, and in his article, 'Borley Rectory Problems,'<sup>2</sup> he records part of the verbatim notes taken at a séance on April 26, 1932. Apparently more than one medium was present, but the principal psychic was a Mr C. W. Warren, a local tradesman, now deceased. Captain Deane says:<sup>3</sup>

Mr Warren was now controlled by the nun from the Rectory, who, after making the sign of the Cross very reverently [and, apparently, assuming the personality of the nun] indicated her veil

<sup>1</sup> Marks Tey, Essex, is about eight miles from Borley.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychic Science* (London, April 1941), pp. 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> The interpolations in square brackets are mine.—H. P.

and rosary, holding out her hands as if showing the latter to the sitters. She seemed very nervous and continually turned her head as if asking advice from 'Zenith' (spirit control), standing behind Mr Warren, and several times put up her left hand, as if holding 'Zenith's' hand for help. The sitters spoke very gently and kindly to her, and persuaded her to write with Planchette, which she did as follows: 'Virgin! Do forgive me! Oh, Mother of Jesus, help me.' (To the sitters): 'How long since that living tomb? I did no wrong: my Father Confessor thought me guilty. Ah, the walls! I was thirsty and they gave me empty bottles! Oh, those bottles! I do not know what has happened. Am I now to go to the Judgment throne, the great white throne?' (Mrs Warren: 'No, dear child. Go with the lady ["Zenith"] who stands behind you and is helping you now. She will take you to a place of rest and beauty. Your terrible sufferings are over, put them out of your mind. You are now going to progress in your new life and be very, very happy.') [The nun]: 'What will the Father Confessor say? He will not forgive me. Bring me spring flowers.' (Mrs Warren brought a bowl of primroses, and she [*i.e.*, the medium, Mr Warren] buried her face in them, as if enjoying their fresh scent, and smiled, after which she took a small bunch from the bowl, laid it on the table, and relinquished control.

Captain Deane writes that in the Marks Tey records the name of the nun is given as 'Evangeline Westcott,' and a 'John Westcott,' presumably her father, is also mentioned. Captain Deane says: 'As these names differ from those quoted in Mr Price's book, and the existence of the nun, or any monastery or convent, has not been established from local records, these items can be pigeon-holed for the time being.'

It is not for me—and I am not competent—to question whether the spirit of a Roman Catholic nun, in such a situation, would be likely to use the mode of expression or words ascribed to her in the séance records. A Catholic priest would know. The mediums said that 'the trouble was due to a demented nun whose spirit they would remove, and from that hour the trouble ceased for nearly two years at Borley Rectory.' I believe this to be true. But the Rev. L. A. Foyster mentions in his diary that on the morning of January 24, 1932, 'the house was entirely different' and, with two exceptions, 'demonstrations definitely stopped until 1935.'

## THE 'SUMMER-HOUSE' NUN

The reader has already heard something of the fourth claimant to be the nun-ghost, in Mr A. J. B. Robertson's report on the Cambridge Commission (Chapter IX). But little was said about the information obtained at this séance on July 22, 1944. It will be remembered that as the Rectory was non-existent, the five members (P. Brennan, P. Brown, C. J. Lethbridge, R. G. Watkinson, and D. Williams) of the Commission who visited Borley on the evening mentioned, were compelled to take up their quarters in the summer-house on the lawn, opposite the Nun's Walk. At about 3.15 A.M. (July 23, 1944) 'a considerable number of faint raps were heard.' They were heard distinctly by all five members of the Commission, who arranged with the 'entity' that they should use the following code: one knock for 'Yes,' two for 'No,' and three for 'Uncertain.' By this means communication was established with whatever was rapping, and intelligent answers were given to the interrogators' verbal questions. Both questions and answers were recorded at the time.

Although Mr Robertson in his report does not give these questions and answers verbatim, I am fortunate in having the complete protocol of this séance in the Borley *dossier*. Mr Robertson sent it to me on September 10, 1944. I will now select some extracts from it:

Are you the ghost of the Rev. Harry Bull? *No.*

Can we help you? *No.*

Could a minister help? *Yes.*

Could a Roman Catholic priest help? [Four knocks, repeated.]

Could a Protestant minister help? *No.* [Promptly.]

Are you a Roman Catholic? [No answer.]

Have you ever done this before? *Yes.*

Have you ever given any help? *No.*

Did you ever ask for help? [No answer.]

Did you ever ask for help from the inmates of Borley Rectory? *Yes.*

Did you ask Mrs Foyster? [No answer.]

Did you talk to Miss Helen Glanville? *Yes.*

By Planchette? *Yes.*

Are you the nun buried at Borley Rectory? [No answer.]

Are you a nun? [No answer.]

Are you a man? *No.*

Are you the ghost of a woman? *Yes.*

Are you the nun associated with Borley Rectory? [No answer.]

Are you a nun? *Yes.*

Did you come from the nunnery near Borley Rectory? [No answer.]

Was it at Borley Rectory? *Yes.*

Are you glad the buildings are destroyed? *Yes.* [Promptly.]

Did you receive Christian burial? [No answer.]

Were you buried as a nun should have been? [No answer.]

Were you murdered? [Uncertain.]

Have you a message for us? *No.*

Did you die about A.D. 1200, or in the thirteenth century? *Yes.*

Have you ever been helped by a minister? *No.*

Have you a message for anyone? *No.*

Do you object to the light? *Yes.* [Promptly.]

[With light extinguished.] Was it about 1250 when you died?  
*Yes.*

Were you associated with the Benedictine monks? [No answer.]

Do you know of Poltergeists here? *Yes.*

Would it be possible for you to tell others? *Yes.*

Do you understand my questions? *Yes.*

Can you inform others? *Yes.*

Do you intend informing them? [Uncertain.]

Will you appear on July 28 [the traditional date on which the nun is said always to appear]? *No.* [One of the sitters was not certain that this *was* the answer.]

Is it impossible? *No.*

Are you capable of Poltergeist activity? *Yes.*

Did you throw the earth on the summer-house? *Yes.*

Was it done to attract our attention? *No.*

Are there others? *Yes.*

Have you communication with them? *Yes.*

[There now followed either fifteen or eighteen knocks in quick succession.]

Are you leaving us? [No answer.]

Mr Robertson concludes his report by saying that there were no further raps, and that the sitters all felt that the last series of knocks signified that the 'entity' would not again communicate. He says the raps were quite faint, but were heard by all five sitters without any difficulty.

I have only one comment to make, and that refers to the

question as to when the nun died. It was a 'leading question,' and the answer was 'Yes.' This question was obviously prompted by knowledge of the traditions connected with the Rectory, and the alleged monastery supposed to have once stood on its site. I cannot help wondering whether, if for '1250' the date '1667' (the year in which 'Mary Lairre' said she died) had been substituted, the answer would have been the same!

I have reckoned the summer-house nun as the 'fourth' claimant, but it may have been 'Mary Lairre' communicating. Curiously, the name of the 'entity' was neither asked for nor ascertained. But as this particular nun (she admitted she *was* a nun) also claimed to have communicated with Miss Glanville via Planchette, she may have been 'Marie Lairre' after all. That would reduce the number of our nun-ghosts to three.

There is yet another 'entity' named 'Mary' that I must mention. In my *Most Haunted House in England* (p. 81) Mr Foyster records in his diary, under August 1931, that 'a medium and an investigator' visited the Rectory and held a séance: 'Different spirits are tackled, among them one "Joe Miles."' In a footnote to this entry I state that I have no information concerning these people.

During my visit to Borley in May 1945 Mr Henning introduced me to Miss Mary E. Braithwaite, J.P., of Brook House, Long Melford. This lady informed me that her brother, the late Mr W. John Braithwaite, had an extraordinary sitting at the Rectory in August 1931, and that if I approached her brother's widow, living at 'Greenwood,' Bidborough Ridge, Tunbridge Wells, she would perhaps allow me to peruse the voluminous report of the séance that Mr Braithwaite compiled at the time from notes taken during the séance.

Mrs W. John Braithwaite very kindly sent me this report of some 5000 words (the 'missing link' that I required when I wrote my previous monograph), and permits me to quote it. It is a remarkable report in many ways. The séance was held at Borley Rectory on August 11, 1931, and was attended by Mr W. John Braithwaite, Mr Ernest Meads, and a Mr Johnson, a medium. There were also present the Rev. L. A. Foyster and,

during part of the time, Mrs Foyster. The séance was a typical spiritualist demonstration, and a number of ‘entities’ ‘came through.’ As each ‘spirit’ presented itself, so the medium successively assumed or absorbed his or her personality (as Mr Warren did at Marks Tey), and conversed with the sitters in the character of the entity. The séance, which lasted from six o’clock to 10 P.M., was very impressive. The medium’s ‘controls,’ or ‘guides,’ were a Red Indian and a ‘Dr Haslam, of Harley Street,’ who died some years ago. The ‘doctor’ diagnosed Mr Foyster’s illness as rheumatism ‘and told him to avoid potatoes, and starchy foods, such as tapioca and sago,’ etc. The ‘doctor’ also told the Rector that he suffered from depression, which Mr Foyster admitted.

The next ‘entity’ was a drunken ex-publican named ‘Joe Miles,’ who kept calling for ‘drinks all round’ and could not be persuaded that he was dead. Asked whether it was he who was causing all the trouble at the Rectory, ‘Joe Miles’ gave an alcoholic grunt which was taken for assent.

Then the medium sighed and said ‘Oh dear!’ and appeared to cry [I am quoting from the report], ‘I don’t know where I am.’ ‘Why, you’re dead,’ Meads cut in, and the spirit seemed to know that. The medium kept sighing and crying in a high voice, ‘I went to London and I had a baby, and I murdered it.’ She gave her name as ‘Mary,’ and said she ‘felt very rebellious’ because of the cruelty with which she was met when she came back to the village. She was turned out at night in the rain and slept under a hedge. Meads went through the same effort to get her to pray and turn to better things. She partly promised to do so.

A number of other ‘spirits’ manifested themselves, and were impersonated by the medium. It would tire the reader to give an account of all these, but one of them, ‘John Wesley,’ really was impressive. I again quote the report: ‘And Wesley, if Wesley it was, gave us a short inspirational sermon lasting some five minutes . . . it was very well done, and much better than the ordinary sermon, and much simpler, and in good language and taste.’ The séance ended with the ‘appearance’ of ‘Cardinal Newman’!

I have said somewhere in this volume that although I saw, photographed, and reproduced several of the 'Marianne' wall-writings, I had never seen one of the many 'messages' that were written on scraps of paper and left about the house, or which came 'fluttering down from nowhere.' These messages were similar to those scribbled on the walls.

Among Mr Braithwaite's effects was found a specimen of a 'paper-message,' and his widow has kindly presented it to me. I reproduce it as Plate XXVI. It is written on the back of an old envelope. First there appeared the one word 'Marianne,' which, as the reader knows, is Mrs Foyster's Christian name. The writing is *identical* in every way with the word 'Marianne' of the four wall-messages reproduced in this volume. Under the word, on the envelope, Mrs Foyster wrote, 'What do you want?' and replaced the envelope where she found it. Shortly after, the word 'Rest' was found written under the question.

I can say little more about Mr Braithwaite's report, except that he records many of the Rectory phenomena, accounts of which I have already published. At the Rectory he saw at least twenty-four 'curious old-fashioned coloured crockery egg-cups' that suddenly 'appeared.' Neither Mr Foyster nor his wife knew where they came from. 'Twelve of these cups were thrown across the room, denting the door, and falling without breaking.' In her covering letter Mrs Braithwaite informed me that from childhood her husband had known Borley Rectory and the Bull family, and heard of the haunting even in those early days.

I have discussed the evidence for the phenomena witnessed at Borley Rectory, and the theories concerning the several nuns. But I feel I must say a word or two about the various methods of communication that have provided us with so much 'information': the raps, the table-tipping, the wall-messages, Planchette, etc. What is the *real* value of the information obtained by these means? I, personally, would hesitate to place too much reliance on them, and more than once in this monograph I have warned the reader that he must assess their importance himself—according to how he feels about it. But I can say this: that the raps I



PLATE XXV. LISTON RECTORY, NEAR LONG MELFORD, SUFFOLK, HOME OF THE  
REV. A. C. HENNING, RECTOR OF BORLEY-CUM-LISTON

Photographed August 30, 1943.

[See p. 286]

PLATE XXVI. A MARIANNE 'PAPER MESSAGE,' FOUND AT THE RECTORY, AUGUST 1931  
Mrs Foyster ('Marianne') added the words 'What do you want?' Later the word 'Rest' appeared.



heard at the séance in the early hours of June 13, 1929, in the Rectory 'Blue Room,' were *genuine paranormal raps*. It was my first visit to the Rectory, and there were several people present in the bedroom, including two of the Misses Bull and the Rev. G. Eric Smith, the Rector, and his wife. The representative of the *Daily Mirror*<sup>1</sup> was also there. For *three hours*, in a well-lighted room, raps were rained upon the large mahogany mirror on the dressing-table, around which we sat, though we were not very close to it. For three hours we received intelligent answers to our questions (mostly concerning the private affairs of the Bull family). Those raps were paranormal, and *were* not, and *could* not, have been produced by any mortal present. And an intelligence was behind those raps. My point is, if the raps were genuine, is it not possible—even probable—that the rapping 'entity' was also genuine, and that the messages were genuine too? If an 'entity' can communicate by rapping on the back of a mirror, then it is logical to suppose that the same 'entity'—or any 'entity'—can communicate by scribbling on a wall or directing the lead pencil of a Planchette board. Still further proof of the paranormal nature of the force at work in the 'Blue Room' that night was the violent levitation of a new cake of soap from its dish at the far end of the closed room, twelve feet from any sitter. The force propelling the soap was so powerful that the cake was deeply dented as it struck the edge of the water-ewer in its fall. It was, perhaps, the most perfect Poltergeist phenomenon I have ever seen.

It has been suggested that the wall-messages were due more to psychological causes than to paranormal ones. In other words, that a human being unconsciously—or subconsciously—wrote them. If this be so, how can we account for the many marks that appeared on these same walls, seven years later, when sceptical observers were actually controlling the walls? The marks appeared spontaneously, under scientific conditions of control. If an entity—discarnate or other invisible—can produce pencil marks in the form of squiggles or Prince of Wales' Feathers (the Waldegrave crest?), under such conditions,

<sup>1</sup> See *Daily Mirror*, June 14, 1929.

is it not logical that the same 'entity' can write 'messages' if it has a mind to? The answer must be 'Yes.' We need doubt the 'messages' no longer.

As for the Poltergeist manifestations, the paranormally produced smells and odours, the tactile and auditory phenomena, the apparitions of the nun and other figures, sometimes seen by several persons at one and the same time, in sunlight—as Sir Albion Richardson says, these things *have happened* and the evidence for them is 'as conclusive as human testimony can ever be . . . to the point of moral certainty.'

#### A REGRET

My only regret concerning the Borley case is that some university department, or the Royal Society, did not *officially* take the Rectory under its wing, investigate the phenomena independently, and issue an official report on its findings. Unfortunately the Borley hauntings occurred about fifty years *too soon* for official Science, and it was left to disinterested investigators, at their own expense, to put on record a complete history of the Rectory phenomena. If the Borley affair had been made public at the end of the twentieth century, instead of at the beginning, some university or other (probably Cambridge, as it is so near) would have sent their best physicists, psychologists, and physiologists to the Rectory, and would have issued a voluminous report, explaining everything. I say this because I *do* believe that in fifty years' time we shall know a great deal more about these matters.

I often wonder if the public are aware what progress in psychical research *has* been made in this country during the past few years. I am quite certain they are not. The 'man in the street' muddles psychical research with spiritualism, with which it has little in common—except that 'survival' may perhaps one day be proved by the scientists. And many people believe that psychical research is anathema to orthodox Science. They are wrong, and this is a fitting opportunity to put on record what academic recognition *has* been accorded to scientific psychical research in this country during the past twenty years, and what progress has been made. It can be stated briefly, and I will

begin with the founding of the six-roomed National Laboratory of Psychical Research, which I opened at South Kensington in 1925. This was the world's first fully equipped laboratory<sup>1</sup> for the scientific examination of alleged paranormal phenomena, and the beginning of sustained scientific and active experimentation in Great Britain.

- 1925. Price founds the National Laboratory of Psychical Research in London, and becomes its Director. Many famous mediums tested.
- 1934. Price makes formal offer<sup>2</sup> to University of London to equip and establish a Department of Psychical Research. After due consideration offer is accepted in principle, and Price is informed officially that the Senate accepts psychical research as 'a fit subject of University study and research.' But room cannot be found for the proposed new Department, so the project is shelved.
- 1934. In order to keep contact with the University authorities, the National Laboratory is transferred to a group of professors and others, under the title of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation, with Price as Honorary Secretary.
- 1936. London University accepts Price's library of psychic literature on permanent loan, and houses the laboratory and equipment of the old National Laboratory of Psychical Research.
- 1937. The German Government, through Bonn University, inform Price that they are willing to accept psychical research as an 'official science,' and invite him to Germany. This is the first time that the Government of *any* country has officially recognized psychical research.
- 1937. The German Government and the University of Bonn offer Price academic and other honours if he will found a Department of Parapsychology (psychical research) at Bonn.
- 1939. J. Hettinger granted the Ph.D. degree (London) for a thesis on mental phenomena.
- 1940. Trinity College, Cambridge, accepts the Perrott Bequest and establishes a Studentship in Psychical Research.
- 1941. New College, Oxford, accepts the Blennerhasset Trust for the promotion of Psychical Research.
- 1943. L. J. Bendit received the M.D. degree (Cambridge) for a thesis on mental phenomena.
- 1944. V. G. Kirk Duncan received the D.Phil. degree (Oxford) for a thesis on mental phenomena.

<sup>1</sup> A full description of the Laboratory, with photographs, can be found in the *British Journal of Psychical Research*, May-June 1926, pp. 11-20.

<sup>2</sup> Full details of the proposal can be found in my *Search for Truth*, pp. 97-110.

1945. S. G. Soal received the D.Sc. degree (London) for work in mental phenomena begun at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

It will come as a surprise to most readers that official Science has recognized psychical research to such an extent. It will be noted that in this country the recognition has been for work in *mental phenomena* only (telepathy, psychopathology, etc.). No one in this country has received honours (such as were offered to me by Bonn) for work done in physical phenomena. It happens that I am more interested in that facet of the subject. So, whatever the scoffers say, the *science* of psychical research is establishing itself. And a good deal has been done in this direction since I founded the first psychic laboratory in 1925.<sup>1</sup> The number of workers in this field is few, but they are being rewarded. Speaking of 'rewards,' I often wonder what would have happened to me had I gone to Bonn in 1937 at the invitation of the German Government.

Will Science ever discover another 'Borley'? I sincerely hope so, and I trust it will not neglect to take full advantage of its possibilities to further our knowledge of those unknown and uncontrolled forces so well illustrated in the Rectory phenomena. If the scientists cannot explain them I hope they will continue their investigations until they do. There *must* be an explanation—probably some new spiritual or physical power beyond our present knowledge, just as radio and the splitting of the atom and a hundred other things were beyond the knowledge of our immediate ancestors.

Why are there so few good cases of hauntings? There have been so many murders, massacres, wars, revolutions, conflagrations, plagues, German extermination camps, and calamities without end. Millions of people die; millions have died violent deaths; and one would imagine that thousands of buildings—or the sites on which they stood—would have retained some psychic echo, emanation, or persisting remnant of their tragic past. The very vastness of our planet, with its myriad events in which so

<sup>1</sup> Mr Price was described by *The Times Literary Supplement* (Dec. 26, 1942) as having 'done more than anyone of his generation to establish psychical research on a scientific basis.'—PUBLISHER.

many human lives have been lost by human violence, should, one would think, guarantee us many 'ghosts.' But such is not the case. Why? Why do we get so few genuine hauntings? Another problem for Science!

Well, I have come to the end of my story and the end of sixteen years' continuous work on the Borley problems. I believe we now know all that can be learned about the case. Some day I should like to visit Le Havre and study its conventional records in an effort to find out more about 'Mary Lairre'—if she ever existed. If successful in my quest, I might be tempted to write up her history—which probably was quite unexciting until she crossed the Channel. In the meantime I present to the reader all the new evidence we possess for the haunting of the Rectory. If he has derived half the pleasure out of reading this evidence as I did out of collecting it, then I shall be more than satisfied.



LIST OF ONE HUNDRED OBSERVERS AND OTHERS<sup>1</sup>  
REFERRED TO IN THIS MONOGRAPH, WHO EXPER-  
IENCED PHENOMENA OR ALLEGED PHENOMENA

Ackland, Mr D.  
 Aickman, Mr R. Fordyce  
 Aickman, Mrs R. Fordyce (for-  
     merly Miss E. R. Gregorson)  
 Aitchison, Lieutenant Ian  
 Angelbeck, B.A., Mr E. N. J.  
 Batchelor, Mr R.  
 Bell, Mr G. J.  
 Bellamy, Mrs H. F.  
 Booth, Rev. Daniel L. (and son)  
 Booth, B.A., Mr G. H.  
 Boyden, Mr Charles A.  
 Braithwaite, Mr W. John  
 Brennan, Mr P.  
 Brown, Mr J. C.  
 Brown, Mr P.  
 Brown, Mr R. A.  
 Cattrell, B.A., Mr V. G.  
 Cook, Mr W. W.  
 Cooper, Mr A. C.  
 Cooper, Mr John  
 Dashwood, Mr J.  
 Elms, B.A., Mr C. F.  
 George, Miss Mary  
 Gooch, Mrs Tom  
 Gordon, Mr I. R.  
 Grantham, Mr J. P.  
 Gregorson, Miss E. R. (now Mrs  
     R. Fordyce Aickman)  
 Hall, B.A., Mr E. B.  
 Hall, Mr L. H. P.  
 Hardy's friend, Mr  
 Hay, B.A., Mr R. M.  
 Hayes, Mr Gilbert  
 Hayes, Mrs Gilbert  
 Heap, B.A., Mr A.  
 Henning, B.A., Mrs A. C.  
 Holden, B.A., Mr B. A.  
 Howarth, Mr J. L.  
 Jackson, Mr Peter  
 Jacomb, Mr M.  
 Jeffrey, M.A., Mr P. Shaw  
 Jelinek, Mr L. W. J.  
 Johnson, Mr (a medium)  
 Jones, Mr D.  
 Kujawa, Lieutenant W.  
 Lankester, B.A., Mr J. E.  
 Ledsham, Miss Cynthia  
 L'Estrange, Mr G. P. J.  
 Lethbridge, Mr C. J.  
 Lethbridge, Mr H. P.  
 Ligaszewski, Lieutenant A.  
 Longmuir, B.A., Mr I. S.  
 Lord, Mr P. H.  
 Low, Mr E. D.  
 Machin, Mr K. E.  
 Marks Tey Circle (several mem-  
     bers of the)  
 Marshall, B.A., Mr F. S.  
 Marshall, Mr Harry  
 Martin, Mrs  
 Meads, Mr Ernest  
 Medcraft, Mr Arthur S.  
 Millard, B.A., Mr J. F.

<sup>1</sup> Additional to those printed in Appendix E of *The Most Haunted House in England*.

Mills, Mr R.  
Nawrocki, Surgeon-Lieutenant  
G. B.  
Newman, Mrs W.  
Ninnis, Mr W. E.  
Officer, An, billeted at the  
Rectory  
Owen, Mr P. L.  
Palmer, B.A., Mr J. R.  
Pearson, Mrs (of Borley)  
Rigby, B.A., Mr D. L.  
Robertson, M.A., Mr A. J. B.  
Robinson, Mr T. M.  
Russell, Mr H. F. (and sons)  
Russell, B.A. ,Mr J. H.  
Savage, Mrs (of Borley)  
Scherman, Mr David E.  
Shakespeare, Dr W. G. (and  
son)  
Smith, Mr V. J.  
Smith's chauffeur, Rev. G. Eric  
Snushall, B.A., Mr D. B.  
Soldiers, a number of, billeted at  
the Rectory  
Squires, Mr G. L.  
Sullivan, Mr T.  
Tree-fellers, a number of, at  
Borley  
Wadsworth, B.A., Mr P.  
Warren, Mr C. W.  
Warren, Mrs C. W.  
Watkinson, Mr R. G.  
Waton, B.A., Mr J. H.  
Wilden-Hart, B.A., Mr K. G.  
Williams, Mr D.  
Williams, B.A., M.B., Mr I. P.  
Wroblewski, Colonel J.

APPENDIX II  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A SELECTION OF THE PRINCIPAL BOOKS, ARTICLES, REVIEWS,  
MANUSCRIPTS, AND BROADCAST TALKS PERTAINING TO THE  
BORLEY HAUNTINGS

This list has been compiled for the convenience of readers wishing to make an evaluative study of the case, by reference to the views, opinions, theories, and 'explanations' of those well-known writers and others who have examined the Rectory phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In order to keep this bibliography up to date, and to make it as perfect as possible, I should be glad if readers would send me any notices or reviews of this book that they may come across. Any cuttings sent to me will be gratefully acknowledged.—H.P.

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